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ETCHING & ETCHERS.

BY

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TO

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN.

HERE is a book written to increase the public interest in an art we both love; and I dedicate it to you because, in the more difficult way of practical demonstration, you have well helped the same cause. It may be a useful service to take a pen and tell a somewhat indifferent, or otherwise-interested public, how great an art etching is; but it is a far higher achievement to take an etching-needle and compel attention by the beauty of actual performance. The reception your etchings met with—a reception unprecedented in the history of the art—must have been gratifying to your feelings as an artist; but I am sure that I interpret your sentiments justly, in supposing that you felt a still keener and nobler pleasure than that which attends any merely personal success. You have the satisfaction of knowing that a great art, hitherto grievously and ignorantly neglected, has, by your labours, received an appreciable increase of consideration; and that, as a consequence of the celebrity of your works, many have become interested in etching, who, before their appearance, were scarcely even aware of its existence. It is rather with reference to this result of your labours than to their purely artistic value that I dedicate this book to you, though, at the

same time, it may be right to add briefly here, what I have said more at length elsewhere, that of all modern etchers you seem to be the most completely in unison with the natural tendencies of the art. How much this implies, and what warm approval may be expressed in this moderate way, the reader will see elsewhere.

PREFACE.

TO understand any art rightly we must first get hold of its central idea, and think from that outwards. This method alone can enable us to ascertain how far the works of individual artists are removed from the centre, and, unless we know where the centre is, we cannot be just. The central idea of etching is *the free expression of purely artistic thought*: of all the arts known to us as yet, etching is the best fitted for this especial purpose. A good etching is a work which achieves this kind of expression completely, and etchings are bad exactly in proportion as they diverge from it. If an artist can express artistic thought, but cannot express it freely, he may draw well, or paint well, but etching is not suitable for him; and if he has freedom of hand, but not thought, he cannot etch in the true sense, because he will miss the points of interest. And the thought must be purely artistic, not merely intellectual; artistic thought being always complicated by peculiar conditions of feeling. An endeavour will be made, in the course of the following pages, to trace and define some of the more obvious of these conditions; but by far the greater part of them are too subtle to be explained in words. The object of the book is to point out how far the art of etching accomplishes its peculiar duty, and how consistently failure

attends every deviation from it. To do this fully, it has been necessary to describe the process in detail, and to study the works of the masters of the art. Hence the book may be useful as a practical manual, and also as an introduction to the study of the great etchers; but these are secondary purposes. Its higher aim, as a contribution to the philosophy of art, has been to define the objects and intention of etching, and to show how closely its success is connected with fidelity to its central idea.

I had intended to end the Preface here, but since I wrote the above it has become apparent that further explanation of one or two points is necessary.

A treatise on etching might be planned in two different ways, and for some time I hesitated between them. The first plan that suggested itself was based on the severest critical exclusiveness. A work executed in conformity to this idea would exclude all illustrations that could not be unreservedly recommended as models, and ignore all etchers who had in the least departed from the ideal of the art. If I had adhered to this plan, I should have mentioned about half a dozen etchers, and given careful copies of a few first-rate etchings, executed by some very skilful imitator, such as Flameng, for instance. On consideration it appeared, however, that a book of that kind would have possessed comparatively little critical or intellectual interest, from the lack of variety and contrast, and from the tiresome sameness of perpetual eulogy. The other plan which remained as an alternative, and which has been here adopted, included an account, not only of the true directions and best achievements of etchers, but also of their false directions and comparative failures, and involved some research into the causes of

these failures, from which, it was thought, might be deduced conclusions likely to be of use in the future practice of the art. And, in the matter of illustration, this latter plan did not confine the selection of specimens merely to examples of unquestionable excellence, but, on the contrary, seemed to require representative specimens of what had been done in the art, so far as these might be attainable.

I am particularly anxious that critics living in London and Paris, should not judge this book by its suitableness to their own needs. They know, or ought to know, what has been done; they have easy access to magnificent collections, and there is much in this volume which will seem to them, if considered solely with reference to their own wants, superfluous. But I have many readers in remote country places, in the colonies, in America, in lonely districts where not a single etching is to be referred to, and I know that these readers will be glad to have a book which contains within itself, not only an explanation of the principles of the art, but a little collection of etchings by various masters, illustrating the different directions, both true and false, which the art has taken in Europe. Readers of this class will be glad to possess the few original plates by old masters which I have been able to procure, not only for their merit, in some instances perhaps not very conspicuous, but for the satisfaction of having at least some strokes by the master's own hand. For instance, I have had the good fortune to secure an original copper by Rembrandt, and M. Charles Blanc, whilst perfectly admitting the genuineness of the plate, which was previously known to him, urged me, in a kind way, not to insert it, on the ground that it was not rare

enough, and not a fine specimen of the master; but then M. Charles Blanc spoke as an eminent Parisian critic to whom all collections are accessible, and did not, in my view, sufficiently consider the position of readers who inhabit such regions as the banks of the Mississippi, or the Cape of Good Hope. A plate which a Parisian connoisseur may have seen so often that he is sick of it, may be quite new to *them;* and though it is true that, in this instance, the master is not represented—for the plate is a mere sketch—still it is something to have even a hasty scrawl from the hand of Rembrandt, and this is as good a scrawl as many others of his, and so may stand for a certain minor class of his works. With reference to this plate, and others, I must warn the reader that there is a class of connoisseurs who, *invariably,* when they see a new impression of an old copper, assert it to be not an original, but a copy—it being by no means generally known what old coppers are still in existence; and I have no doubt that many such connoisseurs will declare the original etchings, by old masters, which are given in this volume, to be merely copies. In the case of the Rembrandt, I have not only the almost irresistible authority of M. Charles Blanc, in favour of its authenticity, but have satisfied myself about it, by the most minute comparison with the proof in the Imperial Library, at Paris,—a comparison in which not only *every* line in the whole plate was carefully gone over, but even the accidental dots and scratches on the copper. I should have been glad to give a finer Rembrandt, if possible, but all the popular plates have long since been worn out, and either rebitten in Rembrandt's lines, or, what is still worse, blackened into a

semblance of life by lines added by other hands; and so it was necessary to seek a plate which had not enjoyed the public favour. It is scarcely necessary to add that, of the Rembrandt coppers which still exist, those which the master finished delicately, with finely gradated tones, are the most injured by wear, and copies taken from them now are worthless. No existing copper of Rembrandt is worth printing from, unless the subject is unpopular, and the execution very simple indeed. Three or four such coppers still exist in Paris, and I procured the one which, on the whole, seemed the least objectionable; the others were too hideous. This one is not exactly pretty; but Rembrandt does not seem to have realized the artistic utility of prettiness: he left *that* discovery to other etchers, on the whole, perhaps, not dangerous as rivals to his fame.

The Paul Potter is an original copper discovered by Delâtre, some time ago, in Paris, and now the property of M. Galichon, of the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. The genuineness of it is quite beyond question, and admitted by all the Parisian connoisseurs. The plate is worn, but not so much so as materially to lower its value as an illustration of Potter's manner, for which purpose it is still better than the most skilful copy.

The Callot is also an original, and belongs to M. Arsène Houssaye. It is not much the worse for wear. It is as good an example of Callot's way of etching as any plate of his I have seen, and has, besides, great topographical interest. It is by no means given as an example of what is best in etching, but merely as an illustration of a kind of work which has been done by a famous artist.

The two Ostades are copies by Charles Jacque, himself a famous etcher. A few original plates by Ostade exist still; but it seemed better, in this instance, to give good copies, because the originals are too much worn.

I regret, of course, the necessity for folding these plates, which is barbarous; but when a reader has the option between having a plate which is folded, and not having it at all, it is likely that he will prefer the former. If not, he has it still in his power to realize the other alternative, by cutting the plate out and destroying it. To enlarge the dimensions of the book were out of the question; it is already too large to be quite convenient.

The Waterloo and Weirotter plates are the property of a Parisian dealer, who owns many other coppers by both these masters. They are in fair condition, and may be considered representative plates.

I find that some of my connoisseur-friends rather object to the insertion of plates which are not rare; but, in the case of old masters, a rare plate could not be inserted at all, because the copper would no longer be in existence. And if, by some extraordinary good-fortune, a copper were discovered of which few copies were previously known, the mere fact of its being published in a work of this kind would at once deprive it of the merit of rarity. No one having the genuine spirit of the collector, who buys etchings as curiosities, and gives a hundred pounds for an artistic fault which the artist hastened to correct, if only the fault proves the rarity of the impression, would attach the slightest value to etchings, however excellent, of which more than thirty may be had of all booksellers for a guinea.

Of the modern plates, the Samuel Palmer, the Haden,

the large Cope, the Lalanne, and one or two others are hitherto unpublished. Mr. Haden's plate, which is a rapid sketch from nature, does not give the more popular aspect of his work, but it will do him justice with artists; the Palmer and Lalanne are thoroughly adequate examples of both masters. Having gone on the principle that the etchings given are not to be considered models of perfection, but only illustrations of different ways of etching, I have inserted three or four plates of my own, which are fair specimens of such work as I am able to do.

One of the greatest practical objections to etching is the difficulty of getting proofs taken every time the etcher wishes to prove his plate. Etching is seldom taken up very seriously at first, and during the early trials, when the etcher most needs a press, he never makes up his mind to incur the expense of establishing one. With a view to remedy this great inconvenience, I have spent some time and labour in the contrivance of presses to unite the two conditions of extreme cheapness and sufficient simplicity, to be constructed by workmen in the common trades. In these plans I have entirely succeeded, and give a drawing of one of these presses, which may be made in any country-town, at a cost of two pounds, and will yield good proofs. The reader who wishes to have this press made will find all necessary explanations.

In concluding this Preface I have a great many people to thank for services of different kinds, without which the book could not have been produced. I am very much indebted to Mr. Macmillan, my publisher, for his liberality and confidence. The English and French

Etching Clubs both at once consented to lend any plates I might select; Mr. Cope and Mr. Haden lent unpublished plates, and Mr. Haden gave me access to his fine collection, always readily answering any questions I asked him. Lalanne etched a plate, on purpose for the book, during an autumnal excursion in Switzerland. Mr. Samuel Redgrave went up to London, from his country-house, more than once, to get etchings that I wanted to study; and my friend Mariller, a French artist, not so well known in England as he ought to be, took upon himself an amount of trouble for me, in Paris, which, I fear, harassed him for weeks. Mr. William Smith, who knows more about old plates than any man now living in the world, made a packet of written notes to help me. Mr. Reid, of the British Museum, guided me through the mass of treasure there, of which my previous knowledge was desultory and imperfect; nor are these the only examples of willingness to forward a work which many have felt to be necessary.

These instances of direct personal help remind us of another kind of help, less easily traced to the givers of it, yet not less real, nor less valuable. In writing a book of this kind, in which, for the first time, a great art is analysed, the author would immensely exaggerate his contribution to the world's knowledge, if he supposed the book to be in any other than a very restricted sense his own. The experience of centuries has been silently accumulating, and the writer does little more than find a clear expression for it.

It was intended to give a Sixth Book, on the Interpretation of Nature in Etching, but this seemed unnecessary after the criticisms of etchers whose ways of interpretation

have in every instance been specially commented upon. It is by the study of the true etchers that men, naturally endued with the same gift, arrive at the right methods of interpretation; but of all the artistic gifts, this is one of the rarest, and it seemed useless to attempt to reduce etching to a recipe for the use of students generally. The most general maxim which may be given on the subject is that an etched line, when it is good, is always in the highest possible degree suggestive, interpretative, explanatory, but hardly ever imitative. Etching is an art which appeals almost exclusively to the mind, and to the eye only as the way of communication with the mind.

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ETCHING AND ETCHERS.

BOOK I.

POWERS AND QUALITIES OF THE ART.

ETCHING AND ETCHERS.

CHAPTER I.

ETCHING COMPARED WITH OTHER ARTS.

I. WITH PAINTING IN OIL.

SETTING aside the obvious difference in favour of painting, that it can represent colour, we find another difference, scarcely less obvious, in the manner of interpretation. The brush is a better instrument than the point, because less conventional, since it does not necessarily resort to lines, and lines do not exist in nature. So far, painting is the higher art; but it is not quite so well adapted to the expression of transient thought. Oil-sketching may be exceedingly rapid, but the medium does not under all circumstances admit of memoranda so completely explanatory as those which may be obtained with the point. In the most valuable oil-sketching, that in which the true relations of masses of colour are accurately preserved, form has to be sacrificed; and yet form is usually more important than colour in the expression of artistic ideas. The very presence of colour entails, in hasty work, the abandonment of form, because in coloured art bad colour is intolerable, and good colour is not attainable at high speed, unless it is made the chief aim of the artist.

When an etching and an oil picture are both produced in the same space of time, the etching is likely to contain a more delicate definition of many interesting points of form than the picture can. An elaborate picture, the labour of weeks or months, may contain more form than any *good* etching, because good etchings are almost always done quickly; but the finished painting loses in freshness what it gains in completion, and belongs to a wholly different class of art. The aim of a laboured picture is power by accumulation; the aim of an etching is power by abstraction and concentration. Here there is no real comparison possible, and we can only insist upon the necessity for keeping the two orders of art as widely apart as may be. It is certain that some very valuable qualities in oil painting can only be attained by frequent correction and repainting; the work is done over and over again, often scraped till the previous work shows through, and then the broken tints so obtained, and which cannot be obtained in any other manner, are made available for the expression of natural variety and infinity. It will be shown in the course of this volume that some results of this kind are more or less attainable in laboured etching, but they are not entirely in harmony with the idea of etching as an independent art. If we remain within the limits of true etching, and then compare it simply with such oil painting as alone is competent to convey rapid inspirations, we shall find that the worker in oil is obliged to sacrifice much to colour, which the etcher easily preserves; and farther, that the very heaviness of the medium, when the painter sketches in thick colour, is an obstacle to liberty of expression which the freely-gliding point avoids. The modern habit of sketching in varnish is in some respects more free, but the adhesiveness of the varnish often interferes with perfect liberty and has to be continually corrected by additions of turpentine. In this method, as in simple oil painting, the embarrassment of colour of course remains.

2. WITH PAINTING IN WATER-COLOUR.

Water-colour approaches more nearly than oil to the facility and freedom of etching, but even water-colour is less direct. True water-colour, in which opaque pigments are not resorted to, attains its end by a series, often a long series, of washes. The paper is subjected to treatment of very various kinds, according to the caprice of the individual artist; but most water-colourists agree on one point, they do not leave their first wash undisturbed; they either sponge it, or rub it with a rag, or rub it with a brush, or take out whole patches of it to paint afresh on the white paper beneath, and these processes are often repeated with subsequent washes, so that there is a continual effacing or alteration of work done. Now although etching admits of correction, it is only on condition of revarnishing the plate, and correction does not enter into the habitual processes, but is resorted to in order to remedy mistakes. A thoroughly successful etching, an etching successful not only in result but in its progress, does not involve anything of the nature of a correction anywhere. All its touches remain; no subsequent work obliterates them; shades may be passed over them, but they remain visible still. It follows that etching exacts more decision than water-colour, and, consequently, more strongly tends to produce the habit of decision in its practitioners.

3. WITH DRAWING IN SEPIA OR INDIAN INK.

Drawings in one colour, done with the brush, bear the same relation to etching that water-colour does, with the single difference of colour. A sepia drawing is likely to have its relations of light and dark more accurately true than an etching by the same artist, but is not so likely to rival it in vivacity of accent. When a sepia drawing, complete as a study of light and dark, aims also at delicate

indications of form, it becomes too costly in point of time to note impressions whilst they are perfectly vivid. The difference between sepia and etching, if the same time is allowed to both, is entirely in favour of sepia if accurate noting of light and shade is the object, and as entirely in favour of etching if the artist wishes to draw attention to points of character. It is exceedingly difficult in etching, and without great labour and correction almost impossible, to note all delicate weights of tone according to the wish and intention of the artist; but in sepia or Indian ink this is so easy that where there is failure it may at once be attributed to the artist's weakness in chiaroscuro. The first aim of a sepia drawing ought to be perfect light and shade, because that is the especial perfection attainable in the method; but for an etcher to make complete light and shade his first aim would be barbarous, because it could only be attainable in his art by great labour, and at the cost of qualities more purely mental which ought to be the glory of his work.

4. WITH DRAWING IN CHALK AND LITHOGRAPHY.

Since chalk-drawings on paper and on stone have the same qualities, they may be considered as one art. Lithography is richer than etching in the fulness of a touch, *c'est plus gras*, its touch is softer and blends better. Some pictures can be better interpreted by lithography than by etching. For example, Troyon is admirably rendered by good lithographers, such as Loutrel, Français, and Eugène Le Roux, and their lithographs convey a better idea of his manner than etching would. All that is said of etching as an autographic art is equally true of lithography; a lithograph by Harding is just as truly his own as a drawing done by him directly on paper. I have often felt surprised that fine lithographs should not be more valued than they are; it is true that the world has been flooded with bad ones, but the existence of bad performances in any art ought not to produce the impression that the art is generally weak. No

one looks for great art in a lithograph; yet lithography is perfectly competent to express great ideas. But, though quite as autographic as etching, and though an appearance of richness is more easily attainable in it, lithography is so far inferior to etching in precision and sharpness of minute accent that it is inconceivable how one of Rembrandt's keen little visages could ever be fairly rendered by chalk on stone. The points on which expression depends in the etching of a face, are so infinitely minute, that no blunt instrument can render them, and the lithographer's chalk is always, when compared with the etching needle, a blunt instrument. It is also continually crumbling away under his hand, and the very grain of the stone he works upon, though necessary to detach and hold the particles of chalk on which his effect depends, is an impediment to the clearness of lines. The lithographer has one great advantage over the etcher, he can see what he is doing, and though drawings on stone always look better on the stone itself than they do in the printed proofs, the artist does not work in negative as etchers do, but in black upon the pleasant warm tint of the stone, just as if he were drawing in black chalk upon tinted paper.

5. WITH PEN-DRAWING AND INK LITHOGRAPHY.

In polite circles where a knowledge of the fine arts has not yet penetrated, it is customary to call pen-drawings 'etchings;' and since the existence of the real art of etching is but little known, it will generally be found that when a young lady is said to etch well it does not mean that she bites copper-plates with acid, but simply that she draws nicely with pen and ink. There are also persons more advanced in the study of the fine arts, who, although aware that etching and pen-drawing are distinct arts, believe nevertheless that their powers and capacities are identical. The truth is, however, that there are several important points of difference, all which are in favour of etching. The pen is a very free instrument, when compared

with the burin, but it is not so free as the etching-needle, and the liberty of the artist is still further limited by the necessity for avoiding blots, which easily occur in close shading. Drawing with the pen may be divided into two distinct arts. In its first, or simple form, pen-drawing consists of lines variously disposed, but *always drawn with ink of the same strength;* in its more complex form, pen-drawing reaches greater delicacy by using ink of infinitely various degrees of dilution, from the palest that can be visible in a line to the blackest that will flow from the pen. The first method can only compete with the most primitive etching, because it can only imitate etchings done in one biting; but the second can also, though at some distance, imitate the more complex etchings produced by several bitings.

It remains to be observed that there is a marked distinction between etching and pen-drawing, as practical arts, in the effect of pressure with the point of the instrument. If you press with your pen you enlarge your line, so that pressure becomes an important means of expression. In etching, on the other hand, pressure ought always to be absolutely equal, and the enlargement of the line can only be effected by taking a blunter point. Pressure, in etching, ought to be equal, because where it is too heavy, the point ploughs the copper and causes over-biting, and where it is too light, the varnish is not perfectly removed, though it may seem to be, and the acid either produces no line at all, or a broken series of dashes and dots. We are so accustomed, in the fine arts, to consider pressure as a means of varying expression, that inexperienced etchers find the greatest difficulty in reaching the steady equality of it which is necessary to the success of the subsequent biting; and this difficulty is likely to be felt the most by etchers accustomed to express themselves in arts, such, for example, as violin-playing, where every *crescendo* is an increase of pressure, and every *diminuendo* a diminution of it.

Pen-lithography belongs to the first of the two classes of pen-drawing; paleness cannot be obtained in it by dilution

of ink, but only by the thinness and paucity of the lines. It follows, that pen-lithography can never approach etching in variety of depth, and can neither rival, on the one hand, the delicacy of its fainter passages, nor, on the other, the vigorous depths of its strongly-bitten blacks. If we add to these inferiorities the comparative want of freedom caused by the use of an instrument which may produce a blot if too full, or a vacant scratch when it runs dry, and which requires replenishing every minute (a continual interruption to the rapid utterance of thought), we have grounds for a comparison which is entirely favourable to etching. Pen-lithography has, however, the great advantages of showing the result during the progress of the work, and avoiding the dangers, whilst it misses the charms, of many bitings. It is, consequently, far better suited for amateurs.

6. WITH DRAWING IN BLACK-LEAD.

The black-lead pencil has some definite advantages over the etching needle. It may be cut very broad, and in this state will rapidly produce pale tints of fine quality, not to be rivalled in etching without much greater labour. It will also yield various degrees of blackness to a variety of pressure. As lead-pencils are made of different kinds, some very hard and others soft and black, some with broad leads for shading, and others to be cut to a fine point, very various qualities are attainable in pencil-drawing. There may be an infinite delicacy and precision with the point, an even breadth of shade, and some considerable depth in the extreme darks. It is, however, especially in these darks that pencil-drawing comparatively fails, because it has an unpleasant tendency to shine, and the blackest black produced with a lead-pencil is always light in comparison with printer's ink. The degree of freedom enjoyed by the designer in black-lead is greater than the pen allows, but inferior to the freedom of the etching-point. It may be observed, however, that for artists who have not reached a

very high degree of decision, this freedom of the etching-point is too excessive to be altogether an advantage. The lead-pencil depresses the surface of the paper where it passes, and so makes for itself a shallow channel whose sides are deep enough to prevent involuntary slips; but the surface of polished copper is so very smooth, and the thin coat of varnish resists so little, that the etcher has need of great firmness and precision in the hand itself, for he can never safely rest upon the point. It follows that pencil-drawing is a far easier art than etching, and in common with the other arts we have been considering, it has the great advantage of being a positive art, etching being altogether negative. It is scarcely necessary to explain these useful terms, borrowed from photography; but as a few readers may be unacquainted with them, it may be well to add that a positive art is one in which darks are represented by darks, and lights by lights; whereas in a negative art, such as etching, darks are represented (in the direct work of the artist) by lights, and lights by darks. This adds greatly to the difficulty of etching, especially in the case of beginners, who find themselves greatly embarrassed by the impossibility (to them) of translating their work into its corresponding positive, as the printing-press will translate it. In sculpture, the sculptor who makes a bas-relief, works in positive, and the seal engraver and die-sinker in negative; but the seal engraver has a great advantage over the etcher in being able to take frequent proofs of his work during its progress, which the etcher can only do after removing the varnish from his plate.

The finest pencil-drawings do not attempt depth of shade, but content themselves with comparatively pale tones. The worst pencil-drawings, those of school-boys who pursue the fine arts, usually abound in passages where great pressure and much repetition, and *very* black pencils indeed, have ended in the production of such brilliant black-leading as might delight the eyes of an artistic housemaid. The blacks of etching are safer in quality, for, at

least, they never shine, and easily reach an intense depth; but the pale tones of pencil-drawing are safer than the pale tones of etching. As to the value of the two methods, much depends on the kind of subject, and much upon the temper of the master. A naked figure, by Gérôme, is better in pencil, because its modelling is truer and more delicate than any modelling Gérôme could express with the etching-needle; but an old man's face, by Rembrandt, is rendered more incisively with the point than it could be with any other instrument.

7. WITH THE GRAPHOTYPE.

Since the Graphotype is a recent invention, it may be necessary, first, to give a brief description of the process. Finely powdered chalk is spread thickly on a metal plate, and then subjected to hydraulic pressure till it becomes a solid mass with a beautiful white surface, slightly shining, but not inconveniently brilliant. On this surface the artist draws in a glutinous ink, perfectly black, flowing from a finely-pointed little brush; the pen cannot be used, on account of the friability of the chalk. The ink glues the particles of chalk where it passes, and when the drawing is complete the white spaces between the lines are easily hollowed by rubbing them gently with a piece of velvet or a light brush. The black lines remain in relief, like the lines of a woodcut. The plate is then dipped in a solution of flint and so hardened, after which a stereotype cast, or an electrotype copy, is taken from it, and this stereotype or electrotype serves to print from as a woodcut.

The most obvious advantage of the graphotype is that it is a positive process in every sense. Not only is it superior to etching in showing the artist black for black and white for white, instead of glittering copper for black, and lamp-black for white, but it is superior both to etching and lithography in the entire absence of reversing; the objects that will be to the right in the print are to the artist's right as he

works. It is as easy as drawing upon paper with a brush-point and ink of uniform thickness, in lines. No brushwork in the painter's sense is possible, nor are any more or less pale lines, but the lines may vary in thickness.

The graphotype is as autographic as any process ever invented, and the artist who is only able to draw, and has not devoted much time to the special study of etching, would find the graphotype a more faithful interpreter of his intentions, because inexperienced etchers never accomplish what they propose to themselves, and are especially liable to disappointment in relations of tone. But the graphotype can never supersede etching, being altogether a coarser and heavier process, and neither capable of the delicacy and extreme tenuity of line which distinguish etching, nor of its invaluable variety of dark. The printer's ink given off upon the paper from a broad graphotype line and a narrow one is of the same thickness, but the ink given from an etching varies in thickness according to the depth of the biting, so that a blind man passing his fingers over a printed etching could tell where the plate had been bitten longest. The graphotype is also decidedly inferior to etching in freedom. When lines have to be drawn with the point of the brush, it is not possible for them to be very rapid, and at the same time to change their direction frequently, without danger of involuntary variation in breadth. The graphotypist is therefore obliged to poise his fine hair-point with great care, and his fingers receive no support from it. If you draw with the point of a lead-pencil your fingers are strongly supported for reasons before given; if you etch with an etching needle the support is far less, because the copper is slippery, yet a practised etcher may lean a little on his point nevertheless; but he who draws lines with a brush can have no support in its point at all. The graphotypist, as he works in wet ink, incurs also some danger in blotting, which must always rather interfere with freedom. The reader may esteem this last consideration of little weight, because all water-colour painters may overcharge

their brushes and blot their work; but the painter in water-colour, if a master of his art, can repair his mishaps, and that to any extent, whereas the graphotypist cannot, but has to trust for such repairs as may be necessary to a special artist in the employ of the Graphotyping Company. This difficulty of repair, or at least this necessity for entrusting repairs to another hand, may be fairly set against the graphotype in a comparison with etching, because although etchings are better without corrections—that is, when they are good enough to require no alterations—the art of etching admits of quite unlimited correction; entire parts of a plate may be rubbed out, as a light pencil-mark is rubbed out, with bread, and the fresh surface of the copper will be as good to work upon as if it had just come new from the plate-maker.

Although we may compare in this manner the possibilities of etching with those of the graphotype, it would not as yet be so useful to compare their practical results. Etching has been understood for many generations; and though many new minds will yet express new thoughts in it, it is probable that etching has attained its full technical power. The graphotype, on the other hand, is quite a new art, and it has had the misfortune to be considered a substitute for wood engraving. It is not, nor ever can be, a "substitute" for wood engraving; no art is a substitute for another art; but if some real artists took a liking for the graphotype, and developed all that is best in the process, pursuing it as a free and original art, without reference to wood engraving or etching, or anything else, then we might hope to see results of genuine quality.

8. WITH WOOD ENGRAVING.

Wood engravers have never been more skilful than they are now, and never more unfaithful to the true nature and principles of their art. No art has been so unfortunate as wood engraving, in being condemned, from the first, to produce results precisely the contrary of the results which

are naturally indicated by the method. If you take a wooden block unengraved, and print from it as if it were a finished woodcut, you will obtain a perfectly black patch, the size of your block. If you take a copper plate unengraved, and print from it as if it were a finished etching, you will obtain a white space, inclosed by four impressed but colourless marks, produced by the edges of the plate, and called the plate mark. If you engrave a line on both block and plate, and then hand them again to their respective printers, your new proofs will give you a white line on a black ground for the woodcut, and a black line on a white ground for the etching. The natural process of woodcutting is, therefore, to leave the darks and mark the lights, showing always the work of the tool as a definite white mark, every touch of it. But as it happens that paper is white and light-coloured, for the most part, and as people are accustomed to see drawings done in dark upon white, because it is easier to make a very black line on white paper than a very white line upon black, it follows that black upon white has come to be considered by the world in general a more natural and rational, and in every way more orthodox method of proceeding than white upon black. So the wood engravers have all along been laboriously cutting out bits of white to make us feel as if they had engraved the black lines, and every hasty scrawl of the draughtsman has had to be carefully cut round by them. Hence, wood engraving has not been a genuine art, except in a few instances, nor have its natural powers been duly cultivated. It has occupied the position of some man of great natural ability, who has had the misfortune to be bred to a profession for which his faculties were always unsuited, who by dint of long study and patience has taught himself to do what was required of him, but who has left his true self uncultivated and unexpressed. There are several instances of true wood engraving in the illustrations of Gustave Doré; but there are many more examples of attempts to imitate other arts. The most genuine wood engraving may be

known at once, by the perfect frankness of its white lines, and the plain intention of its white spaces, as cut out *lights*, not mere intervals of white paper. It may be objected, that art more naturally proceeds by black lines than by white lines; but this is one of the common illusions of custom. We are more accustomed to see artists work in black lines than in white; but if the question be referred to nature, it will be found that natural darks are relieved against lights, and lights against darks, in about equal proportion, so that the power of drawing white lines is just about as useful as the power of drawing black ones. The next time the reader sees a common hedge he will have an opportunity for testing this doctrine, and will as often find light twigs against dark places as the converse.*

An attempt to compare wood engraving with etching is embarrassed by the various false directions of wood engraving as practised by contemporary artists. One of its recent developments is the imitation of etching itself; and here, of course, the false art remains at an infinite distance from the true one. No wood engraving can ever reach the variety of tint obtained by variety of biting; and although modern woodcutters are, as mechanics, skilful to a degree which would have astonished Albert Durer, no surface printing can give lines of such fineness and delicacy as may

* As instances of genuine wood engraving, by white lines and spaces, may be mentioned the following subjects from Doré's "Quixote:"—"*Mais, Seigneur, est-ce bonne règle de chevalerie que nous allions ainsi par ces montagnes comme des enfants perdus?*"—Vol. i. ch. xxv. engraved by Pisan. "Tandis qu'on naviguait ainsi, Zoraïde restait à mes côtés.—Vol. i. ch. xli. engraved by Pisan. "Enfin au bout de trois jours on trouva la capricieuse Léandra dans le fond d'une caverne."—Vol. i. ch. li. engraved by Pisan. "J'ai déjà fait, Seigneur Durandart, ce que vous m'avez commandé dans la fatale journée de notre déroute."—Vol. ii. ch. xxiii. engraved by Pisan. "Je suis Merlin, celui que les histoires disent avoir eu le diable pour père."—Vol. ii. ch. xxxv. without engraver's name. "Là se termine le chant de l'amoureuse Altisidore."—Vol. ii. ch. xliv. engraved by Pisan. In the last the reader may observe the frank cross-hatching of white lines on the stones above the door. Some black lines are still preserved, however, from habit, especially in the dresses of the ladies.

be reached by etched lines, or dry-point scratches, with the ink *in* them. The best way to compare the wood engraver's imitation of etching with etching itself, is to put such woodcut copies of Rembrandt's etchings, as those published in the "Histoire des Peintres," side by side with the originals. The woodcuts in that publication are as good as any modern imitative work whatever, so that the comparison is a fair one. The character of the original is cleverly suggested; but the degree of reproduction attained is about that attainable in a pen-drawing, with thick Indian ink, never diluted for lighter passages.

Another kind of wood engraving is the imitation of burin-work on copper or steel. By far the best instances of this are the cuts after Durer's copper or steel plates, in the work just referred to, especially the "Melancholy," which is a wonderful example of clear and minute line-cutting. To compare work of this kind with etching is unnecessary, because all the qualities of woodcut imitations of steel engraving are possessed in higher perfection by steel engraving itself, which we shall shortly have to consider.

Next to woodcutting in avowed white lines, the kind of work in which the engraver has most to do is the interpretation of tints. In fac-simile engraving, the engraver has nothing to do beyond the removal of unstained wood, an operation requiring no more intellect, though greater manual skill, than the rubbing away of chalk in the graphotype. But the accurate interpretation of tints requires great artistic judgment, as well as great manual skill; and the wood engraver who renders a washed drawing without missing any essential relation of tone, and by means of lines invented by himself, is exercising an art which, whether true or false in its method, has claims of its own, and may be seriously compared with etching. What first strikes us is a wide difference in popularity, entirely in favour of wood engraving. Interpretative wood engraving (as opposed to fac-simile wood engraving) is in the fullest and most extensive sense popular. Many thousands of copies of woodcut

illustrations are sold easily, when the same subjects, if they had been etched on copper, would have found with difficulty two or three hundred purchasers. This is due, in part, to the greater cheapness of woodcuts, which may be cheaply printed, and will yield immense editions without deterioration; but it is also due, and in a still greater degree, to some quality in wood engraving which charms the ordinary spectator, and which is either absent from etching, or neutralized by some other peculiarity offensive to the uneducated eye. It is probable that this quality is an appearance of softness. First-rate modern woodcutting, aided by the artifice of inserting various thicknesses of paper, so as to obtain a variety of pressure in the printing, attains a degree of softness in itself highly agreeable, and always delightful to the ignorant. Etching, on the contrary, has a natural tendency to look meagre and "scratchy," a tendency overcome only by the most skilful masters. If the reader will take the trouble to compare Mr. Birket Foster's drawings on wood, as interpreted by Mr. Edmund Evans, with the etchings of the same artist, he will at once understand the popular feeling, though he may not fully share it. The engravings are richer and softer than the etchings; they have more amenity. It is with the fine arts as with individual men: amenity is a more popular quality than freedom or truth. Etching is like those characters in real life, too seldom appreciated at their full value, who have abundant energy, great freedom of manner, and an insight too keen to be always agreeable, and whose intense personality and originality make them almost incapable of concession or conformity. Wood engraving is usually executed in quite a different spirit. The engraver does not work passionately, like the true etcher, but gives patient and skilled labour to make his work pleasant to the eye. His art is thus more in unison with the temper of society, which likes a gentle manner and perfect training in little things, and rather objects to intellect, if it disdains conventional expression, and takes no pains to make itself agreeable. The whole

life of the wood engraver is devoted to arts of interpretation, which the etcher disdains as mechanism; and it is to the perfection attained in these minor arts that the popularity of modern wood engraving is due.

9. WITH ENGRAVING IN MEZZOTINT.

Having prepared his plate by roughening it all over with a heavy tool, so constructed as to present a great number of little sharp teeth, each of which produces a small indentation and raises a corresponding bur, the engraver in mezzotint starts from a point exactly opposed to that of the aquafortist. His plate, before anything is represented upon it, yields an impression which is entirely black, and a very rich soft black, perfectly equal, and showing no line or mark of any kind. The etcher's plate, on the contrary, yields a perfectly white impression. The engraver in mezzotint, like the engraver on wood, makes his plate lighter as he works, whilst the etcher darkens his plate. There is also another difference, not less important—the etcher works by lines, and the mezzotint engraver by spaces. The consequence of these differences of method is a difference of quality and spirit. Every art, so long as it is healthy and rightly pursued, tends to express chiefly those artistic ideas which it can express most easily. Mezzotint is naturally rich and soft, with the corresponding defect of vagueness and want of precision in detail, and because its blacks are so full and perfect, and so cheaply obtained, it has a tendency to blackness. Etching tends to thinness and hardness, but is capable of any conceivable degree of firmness and precision in detail. It would be absolutely impossible to engrave in pure mezzotint one of Rembrandt's etched faces on the same scale, without missing some of those sharp and delicate accents upon which the power of the work mainly depends. On the other hand, although pure etching, without the bur raised by the dry point,* can never imitate the peculiar

* See the chapter on Dry Point.

velvety softness of mezzotint, it can fully rival its depth and richness of effect. The two arts are to a considerable extent complementary of each other. Pure etching, when not laborious in finish, has a meagre look which mezzotint corrects, and mezzotint has a want of energy and precision which a few etched lines may often effectually supply. Mezzotint and etching are therefore often seen in combination, as in the "Liber Studiorum" of Turner. Engravers' etching, in combination with mezzotint, is now popular enough, when helped by machine-ruling, for the production of large prints to hang in drawing-rooms. The mezzotint gives a look of softness, and the machine-ruling an appearance of neatness, which make the etching pass current with the print-buying section of the public.

10. WITH LINE ENGRAVING.

The mechanical difficulties of line engraving are so great that they have naturally absorbed much of the attention of line-engravers—*so much* that the conquest of mechanical difficulty has been too often regarded by them as the chief aim of their lives, to the neglect of artistic qualities. The degradation of line engraving was complete when a tradition had at length regulated every method of interpretation, and, leaving nothing to the instinct and feeling of the workman, prescribed for him where to put thick lines and thin lines, and lozenges with dots in the middle. Having attained skill in a difficult handicraft, the engravers became proud of their accomplishments, and, forgetting that the only rational use of them could be the interpretation of artistic ideas, took to displaying them for themselves, without reference to either nature or art. To cut lines regularly, and put dots neatly, became an aim in itself. The instrument chiefly used by line-engravers, the burin, is answerable for much of this lamentable aberration. No tool used in the fine arts has less freedom. It is difficult to handle, requires the application of an appreciable amount of force, and is always slow, even

in the most skilful hands. The lines which it cuts are singularly pure and sharp, and it can vary both their thickness and their depth, obediently to the pressure of the fingers and the lower part of the palm. It describes beautiful curves quite naturally, like a skate that bites in ice, but it has great difficulty in following violent and minute irregularities. Its operation on the mind of the artist who uses it is always to make him patient and very attentive to mechanical matters, for which he has to be perfectly cool, and this coolness easily chills into coldness. If modern line-engravers were in the habit of engraving their own inventions, as Durer did, the chilling influence of the instrument would have been less visible in their work, because a man who expresses his own thought has always more heat and vivacity than a man who only interprets the thought of another. The misfortune of line engraving has been that mechanical dexterity has been made too absorbing a pursuit, and that it has been devoted too exclusively to copyism. No art could long resist these adverse influences. Even etching itself, free and original as it is, would lose much of its freedom and all its originality if the public required from it mechanical perfection, and set it to the dull business of copying finished pictures.

The decline of line engraving, in the commercial sense, has been due to its great costliness rather than to any artistic deficiency, and as this costliness in money is merely an expression for costliness in time, line engraving cannot flourish, as etching may, in spite of public neglect, because the practitioners of it cannot afford to pursue it without reference to pecuniary results. Such an art as line-engraving cannot exist without liberal support, but the failure of such support is not to be taken as any proof of inferiority in the art. Line engraving had great powers peculiar to itself. It was especially adapted for the rendering of the naked figure, whose elaborate curves and complicated modelling were well expressed by the burins of the great engravers. As the interest in the naked figure has declined, and given

place to an interest in landscape and costume pictures, it is natural that less value should be attached to a kind of engraving which greatly surpassed other kinds of engraving in the naked figure only, and which would be thrown away upon the interpretation of popular modern art. Few naked figures in pure etching have yet reached the perfect modelling of the great line-engravers, but on all other points the artistic advantages rest with the etchers, however great may be the mechanical charms of clean-looking burin work.

The wonderful landscape-engravers of the earlier part of this century, Goodall, Wallis, Miller, and others, to whom must be added Mr. J. C. Armytage, though not strictly line-engravers, for they admitted etching and dry point work (the bur being removed), have reached qualities which for painter-etchers may be considered hopeless. Their marvellous renderings of weights of colour in plates from Turner's most delicate drawings, and especially their exquisite skies, are quite beyond rivalry in such etching as painters may safely attempt. All etched skies that I have seen, not excepting the best of Haden and Rembrandt, and even Claude, are either rude or simple in comparison with such skies as the best in Rogers' Poems, and plates 63, 66, and 67 in the fifth volume of "Modern Painters." In Mr. Armytage's skies, machine-ruling has been admitted as a ground tint, and the lights scraped and burnished out; in the illustrations to Rogers the skies are, for the most part, pure dry point. A skilful etcher, such as Haden or Méryon, may give very intelligible hints of the mental emotion felt by him in the presence of some splendid natural sky, but he cannot render the sky itself, the evanescent delicacy of the cloud-forms, their melting imperceptible gradations. But the engravers have truly made plates of copper yield images as closely resembling skies as the absence of colour and feebleness of art's light may admit of; they have done more than suggest, they have represented.

A brief recapitulation of the foregoing pages may be useful before we proceed farther.

Etching is superior to oil-sketching in form, and to oil-painting in freshness.

It is superior to water-colour in decision and directness, because its earliest work remains, being never obliterated by subsequent washes and removals.

It is inferior to sepia-drawing in accurate rendering of weights of light and dark, but superior to it in indications of form.

It is superior to lithography in precision of minute form and sharpness of accent, but inferior to it in richness and fulness of touch.

It is superior to pen-drawing in freedom, variety, and power, but inferior to it in not being sensitive to pressure.

It is superior to the lead-pencil in depth and power, but inferior to it in equality of pale gradations.

It is superior to the graphotype in variety of depth and in delicacy of line, but inferior so far as executive facility is concerned, in being entirely a negative art whilst the graphotype is entirely positive. Etching is, however, superior to the graphotype in freedom.

Etching is superior to wood engraving in freedom and depth, but inferior to it in the kind of amenity which is popular.

It is inferior to mezzotint in softness, but excels it in firmness and precision.

It is far superior to line engraving in freedom, but, unless in exceptional instances, inferior to it in the modelling of flesh. Etching is also very far inferior to the best modern point-engraving in the representation of skies.

The strong points of etching in comparison with other arts, are its great freedom, precision, and power. Its weak points may be reduced to a single head. The accurate subdivision of delicate tones, or, in one word, perfect tonality, is very difficult in etching; so that perfect modelling is very rare in the art, and the true representation of skies, which depends on the most delicate discrimination of these values, still rarer.

CHAPTER II.

DIFFICULTIES AND FACILITIES OF ETCHING.

IN an article on Mr. Haden's etchings in the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, Mr. Palgrave gives some encouragement to the general opinion that etching is one of the easiest of the arts. "Mr. Haden has wisely chosen that branch of art which lays by far the smallest stress on a long course of manual practice. Engraving in its severest forms must probably be placed below oil-painting or sculpture in its manual demands. But the highest skill in etching might be reached sooner than the skill to lay one square inch of even lines with the graver."

Mr. Palgrave refers to the difficulty of manual execution only, and there is much truth in what he says, but not the whole truth. In speaking of an art like etching, it is exceedingly difficult to detach manual from intellectual qualities. In line engraving this is easier, because in line engraving manual dexterities have been made a distinct aim, and you know when a man can make lozenges of equal dimensions, and put his dots exactly in the middle of them. But the peculiarity of etching, and its great nobility as a fine art, consists in its disdain of all mechanical or purely manual dexterities whatever. The quality of an etched line depends on its meaning, and on that alone. Skill in etching is always complicated with considerations of feeling and knowledge; if you eliminate these, anybody may etch, because anybody can make lines on a varnished plate as clear and free as Haden's.

When Mr. Palgrave says that "the highest skill in etching might be reached sooner than the skill to lay one square inch of even lines with the graver," he does not tell us by what sort of person this "highest skill" in etching might be so easily reached. This is unfortunate, because the reader may allowably infer that average humanity is understood.

The "highest skill in etching" cannot be reached at all by the average aspirant. Thousands have attempted etching, and these include painters of considerable artistic culture and experience. In this multitude you cannot find thirty first-rate etchers: there are not twenty, there may be ten. If there is any human pursuit wholly inaccessible to men of ordinary powers, it is etching. In this respect there is nothing comparable to it except poetry. Patient industry and some imitative faculty may produce a passable engraving; learning and long training an academic picture; but nobody can be taught to make fine etchings or fine poems.

Some pursuits require long labour, but reward all students of fair ability who are willing to give the labour; amongst these are the common trades and professions. Other pursuits reward a few aspirants richly and speedily, but to men of ordinary organization give no return for a whole life of toil. The first may be difficult, but are yet possible to all sane men at the price of ten or fifteen years' labour; the second may be what is called "easy," and yet to nineteen men out of twenty absolutely and eternally unattainable.

The highest skill in poetry might be reached sooner than a comprehensive acquaintance with historical literature.

Yes, if you pre-suppose a Tennyson.

The greatest technical difficulty of etching—not precisely a "manual" difficulty, for it depends in great measure upon the use of the mordant—is the difficulty of arriving at the relative weights of dark which the artist desires.

In this respect etching is far more difficult than any form of art where results are immediately visible. An artist may be able to get the tones he wants in sepia, or with the

pen, and yet be altogether uncertain with the etching-needle.

Etching is here more difficult than line engraving, because the engraver sees his plate, and has frequent proofs taken during its progress, for his guidance.

A negative process is always so far more difficult than a positive process. Drawing on wood, lithography, and the graphotype, are technically easier than etching.

When the brush can be used for shading, instead of lines, there is, so far, greater facility. Setting aside the difficulty of colour, painting is easier than etching.

In an introductory letter by M. Charles Blanc, prefixed to Lalanne's treatise on etching, occurs the following passage :—

"Ah! si les dilettantes qui s'ennuient, si les artistes qui aiment à fixer une impression fugitive, si les riches qui sont blasés sur les plaisirs de la photographie savaient combien est piquant l'intérêt de l'eau-forte, votre petit ouvrage aurait un succès fou. Il n'est pas jusqu'aux femmes élégantes et lettrées qui, fatiguées de leur désœuvrement et de leurs chiffons ne puissent trouver un délassement plein d'attraits dans l'art de dessiner sur le vernis et d'y faire mordre avec esprit leurs fantaisies d'un jour."

It is very possible that if ladies in general were to take up etching as they took up potichomanie a few years ago, the sale of manuals on etching might become very considerable, but the cause of true art would gain nothing by the spread of a delusive fashion of that kind. In the whole range of the arts it is not possible to suggest one so unsuitable for ordinary amateurs. Very much of the merit of an etching depends upon abstraction, and abstraction requires even greater knowledge than elaboration. Etching must be done rapidly and decisively, whereas when the untrained draughtsman goes fast he always goes wrong, and when he is rigidly decisive it is rigidity in error. A process to suit amateurs should require as little abstraction as pos-

sible, and allow of as much hesitation and correction; above all, the effects of work done should be clearly and immediately visible. The most suitable art for amateurs is oil painting without the embarrassment of colour. A tube of flake white and a tube of burnt umber, a prepared milled-board, a selection of hog brushes and a little linseed oil, are the easiest materials for an amateur to manage; with these he can see what he is doing, and may correct and efface as much as ever he pleases. But a copper plate covered with black varnish, in which every line shows itself in glittering metal, an arrangement of shading made wholly with a view to a future biting, a needle that slips about on the smooth copper every time the hand trembles or hesitates,—these are *not* favourable conditions.

Having quoted two writers with whom, however greatly we may respect their general ability, we find it impossible to concur on this particular question of the supposed facility of etching, it is agreeable to change the attitude of opposition for that of cordial approval, and conclude the chapter with a quotation which has our entire adherence.

In the *Fine Arts Quarterly* for June, 1866, a writer who preferred to remain anonymous, but who gave evidence of unusual knowledge of his subject, as well as unusual enthusiasm for it, naturally found himself obliged to notice a delusion which, however unworthy of serious attention, too generally detracts from the estimation of etching to be passed over in silence:—

"Of all modern misapprehensions connected with etching —once accounted an art in which only a master could excel—is that which supposes it to be particularly suited to the half-educated artist. The experience which has arisen out of close observation and practice, and which enabled the old etcher to express himself promptly and by simple means, is in these days, it would seem, a proof that his treatment is loose, and that he deals only in indications. The fact that he has learned to select essentials and reject non-essentials, and especially if he is able to do this before

nature, that he is merely sketching; in short, the very qualities which even a great artist is the last to arrive at—simplicity and breadth—are, for some unaccountable reason, quoted to his prejudice if he happens to be able to observe them on copper. For ourselves, we are well persuaded that etching, of all the arts, is the one least fitted to the amateur; supposing, of course, the amateur to be the person he is generally described to be. But there are amateurs of different degree."

CHAPTER III.

THE POPULAR ESTIMATE OF ETCHING.

THE existence of the art of etching is not yet generally known. The word is generally known, but not the meaning of it. As we have already observed, the word "etching," in non-artistic circles, is used to express drawing in pen and ink.

A curious sign of the degree of art culture supposed to be generally attained by our educated public is, that the writer in the *Times* newspaper, when reviewing Haden's etchings, found it necessary to preface his observations with a brief account of the process by which they were produced. Another and perhaps still more significant fact is, that when a recent publication of the Etching Club was issued, the subscribers were informed that "these etchings were drawn on copper by the artists themselves, and are not touched by any engraver."

When a person has become clearly aware of the existence of etching, as an art distinct from pen-drawing, and not intended to be an imitation of it; when he knows that an etched line is bitten by acid in copper or steel, and that the rest of the plate is covered with varnish, the line having been laid bare by the passage of a needle which has removed the varnish along its course, then he has reached the first stage in the knowledge of the art. But he may still be liable to a wrong estimate of etching, though he understands, in a rudimentary way, its processes. He may believe it to be an unfinished or inferior kind of

engraving. An old printer, who occasionally printed painters' etchings, but was more commonly employed upon engravings, divided the etchings of engravers and those of painters into two categories, as being "finished" and "unfinished." The plates of Rembrandt were not, in his view, completed works, but attempts at engraving, which had stopped far short of completion because the artist was unable to carry them farther.

There exists also an idea that etching is an "imperfect art." It is not more imperfect than line engraving, though its limitations are different. Every art has its limitations. No sculptor could ever carve a tree in marble, and yet we do not speak of sculpture as an "imperfect art." The powers and limitations of etching are fairly examined elsewhere in this volume, and the writer's conclusion is by no means unfavourable. Indeed, it is easy to show that the art is unusually versatile.

A notion which could grow up nowhere but in England, the natural home of theories about the dignity of occupations, is, that etching is beneath the attention of great painters. The writer actually met with a print-seller who considered it beneath Landseer's dignity, as a knight and Academician, to condescend to etch! No serious refutation can be given to objections of this kind.

Sometimes etching is altogether excluded from the pale of art. A print-seller asserted that the public "did not like etchings, it liked *h*art." On being requested to give a definition or an example of art, the printseller was at no loss, but instantly replied, "Birket Foster's water-colour drawings."

Etchings are admitted to the exhibitions of the Royal Academy, but no etcher, as such, is admitted to academical honours. So little is the art recognised, that any complaint, on account of this exclusion, would be likely to cause unfeigned astonishment. Engravers, who are copyists, are eligible; etchers, who are just as much original artists as the painters themselves, are not only ineligible,

but the very idea of their possible eligibility, of their having any conceivable claim to such recognition, is so novel, that nobody has ever entertained it.

These signs of apathy are briefly noticed here to mark the stage we are just leaving. The reception of Mr. Haden's etchings, and especially the intelligent and abundant criticism which hailed them in the periodical press, was the dawn of a greater enlightenment. Indifference to etching is wholly incompatible with high art-culture; and if we really advance, as we suppose ourselves to do, the true rank and importance of the greatest of the linear arts cannot long remain hidden from us.

Much of the enjoyment which we derive from art, consists in recognition of the truths which the artist intended to express. But people recognise only what they already know; therefore this pleasure is very slight at first, and increases with our acquired knowledge. And there are certain forms of art so strangely abstracted and abbreviated, that very great knowledge is required in the spectator to read them at all, just as it is necessary to understand a language thoroughly if we would read letters in it in a hurried handwriting, full of marks and abbreviations peculiar to the individual writer. To the informed judge, this kind of artistic expression is, from its perfect frankness, peculiarly interesting; to the ordinary spectator it is uninteresting, because illegible.

The art of etching has no mechanical attractiveness. If an etching has no meaning it can interest nobody; if its significant lines are accompanied by many insignificant ones, their value is neutralized. But if all the lines are significant, and the spectator unable to read their meaning, they must seem to him quite as worthless as those of a bad etching seem to a thorough critic.

Much of the popularity of engravings is due to the neatness of the mechanical performance, which all recognise. Machine-ruling is agreeable because it is so neat and regular; mezzotint is pleasant because it is rich and

soft; some oil-painting looks marvellously smooth. Almost every art, except etching, has some external charm of this kind, which, independently of mental expression, serves to secure the approbation of the vulgar. It is because etching has no attraction of this kind that it is not, nor can be, popular.

Since, however, etching relies on qualities of sterling value, it can never cease to be highly appreciated by a limited public of its own; and in countries where general art-culture is on the increase, this little public must always be adding to its strength, and better able to make its opinion listened to.

This little public, loving the art on high grounds, is naturally fastidious. The buyers of etchings are more difficult to please than the buyers of pictures. The extensive sale of bad etchings would do no good to the art, and, if etching were popular, it is likely that many etchers would work down to a low popular standard, as so many painters are, in these days, compelled to do or starve.

It is a matter less for regret than congratulation that an art should exist safe from the baneful influences of vulgar patronage. This is the good side of unpopularity, and it is enough to reconcile all who truly love what is noble and genuine in etching, to the general neglect of it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INFLUENCE OF CONNOISSEURSHIP.

THE greatest evil in the present relation of etching to the public is, that in the little world that really cares for it there should exist a too considerable proportion of persons who are rather connoisseurs than amateurs. The distinction between the two is worth insisting upon, because true amateurs can do nothing but good to any art, whilst connoisseurs, though of use in their way, and even necessary in small numbers, mix their usefulness with much that is positively harmful.

A genuine amateur is a person who values art because it is good as art, and not because it is dear and rare. A genuine amateur looks for artistic merits alone, and is so entirely free from the passion of curiosity-hunting, that he guards himself against the curiosity-madness as a man with a great moral ideal guards himself against dipsomania. The love of curiosity-collecting seems to him a weakness, having some possible utility in the preservation of certain objects in a half-civilized century like this, and so to be tolerated till we finally emerge from the condition of savagery; but he sees clearly that it is not a love of art. Somebody with the curiosity-mania happens to take up button-collecting, or cork-collecting, or autograph-collecting, or by accident he may be turned to the collecting of etchings, which, on account of rare states, offers as much to interest him as anything else; but the true amateur knows the difference between this fancy and the love of art for its

own sake. One such amateur said, "I earnestly wish that all works of art, good, bad, and indifferent, were just worth as much as a gallon of atmospheric air, and no more; we should find out *then* who loved art and who didn't." A man who could say that, and, having a collection of his own, wish it heartily, had the spirit of the noblest amateurship. That spirit desires what is good, but takes no pride in the exclusive possession of it, and only wishes that others might have the good things also, and the ability to enjoy them. If I have a rare etching by Rembrandt, and am happy and proud that other people want it, and envy me because they cannot get it, I lie in the slough and mire of a low egotism, and if I glorify myself as a lover of art on these grounds, I deserve no good report. A fair test of true amateurship is the way people take the recent discovery of steeling. In former times, an etching on copper yielded a few hundred impressions, and a dry-point about one-tenth of the number, before the plate was worn into worthlessness. The finest impressions were the earliest, and when the plate became old it yielded impressions so wretched, that copies of the finest Rembrandts, in the last stage of their existence, are now not worth in the market more than a thousandth part of the value of the earlier proofs, whilst the difference in artistic estimation would be much wider, being infinite. But in these latter days an ingenious Frenchman has called in electricity to remedy this evil. He covers a copper-plate after it is engraved, with a coating of steel so infinitesimally deep, that it does not fill up the lightest scratch of the dry-point. During the printing, it is this coating of steel, and *not* the copper, which has to bear the friction; and when the steel is worn through in any place it is easily removed, by a solvent which does not hurt the copper; after which, the plate may be re-steeled, and this may be repeated over and over again, so that immense editions of etchings may, in these days be printed, without friction on the copper, only on its thin steel coat. It follows, of course, that unless especial care is taken *not* to benefit by this discovery, the

days of rare fine proofs, in work done after this time, are over. Everybody will be able to get good proofs of the work of etchers, just as everybody is able to get a correct edition of Scott or Byron. Now this discovery is hateful to lovers of etchings as curiosities, and altogether acceptable and delightful to true amateurs of art. A true amateur hates an impression from a worn plate, not because it is common, but because it is bad as art: the relations of tone having all gone wrong, and the most delicate lines being lost altogether; but the curiosity-hunter hates worn impressions chiefly because they are common, and may be had of the low print-sellers, on the Quai des Augustins, at ten sous a-piece. The true amateur is glad of a discovery which will make good etchings cheap by mere multiplicity of good impressions, so that nobody will be tempted to exhaust a plate. Would it be a bad thing if there were a million perfect copies of Rembrandt's finest works? Are there not a million copies of Hamlet, and do we value Shakespeare the less for his boundless publicity, and illimitable possibility of reproduction?

Amateurship, in the higher sense, means the state in which the love of art is chief, and everything else subordinate. In connoisseurship, knowledge is chief, and the pride of knowledge, love being subordinate or non-existent. The glory of connoisseurship is to have ascertained, and to possess in perfect readiness, many facts relating to work done by famous men; and these facts have very often no connexion whatever with artistic quality or natural truth. It is a great thing for a connoisseur, for instance, to know whether a plate is rare or common, a matter which artistically is of absolute indifference. Another great point in connoisseurship is to be aware of the indications by which different states are determined: for instance, if in the first state of a certain plate, by Rembrandt, the end hair in a dog's tail has a bur, and if, in the second state, this bur has been removed with the scraper, a professed connoisseur could scarcely avow his ignorance of the fact; whilst from

the artistic point of view ignorance of such details is perfectly avowable, and is of no importance, unless they seriously affect the artistic quality of the work. No amateur need be ashamed of not having the peculiar kind of knowledge which belongs to connoisseurs. When Providence ordained that there should be connoisseurs, it was with a view to the preservation of thousands of minute facts which the artistic class would have despised too much to treasure them for the benefit of mankind. As the mania for collecting curious things has rendered the general service of preserving much that is valuable as an illustration of the past, so the instinct which leads men to collect odd facts makes these men of use as living books of reference.

The good which connoisseurs do is, to hand down from generation to generation a mass of interesting traditions or discoveries about what has been done in art; the evil which they do is to produce a too general impression that this kind of knowledge is the knowledge of art itself. It cannot be too clearly stated or understood, that a man may have immense artistic and critical acquaintance with some branch of the fine arts, and yet not be a connoisseur at all; or he may be an accomplished connoisseur in the usual acceptation of the word, and yet have very little artistic or critical acquirement. You find connoisseurs, who really *are* connoisseurs—that is to say, they can tell you who did a thing and when, and give a shrewd guess as to the price it would be likely to fetch in the market—and yet these men can neither draw themselves, nor tell good drawing from bad when they see it. They recognise works of art as we recognise men's faces, without artistic study. They can tell the touch of an artist as we know the handwriting on the back of a letter, without waiting to see the signature. People hear them talk about rare impressions, and curious states of the plate, till they are finally persuaded that the study of art means this, and nothing better than this.

Connoisseurs when they are rich are naturally collectors, and even when a collector in his heart holds such knowledge

as theirs in slight esteem, compared with the higher knowledge of artists and true critics, he is, nevertheless, compelled to become a connoisseur in self-defence. It is not safe to buy old etchings, without being guided in some measure by connoisseurship, either in your own person, or in the person of some quite faithful friend. Books written by connoisseurs are very useful, as they save one the trouble of remembering the facts they are always ready to communicate.

The difference between connoisseurs and amateurs in etching, accurately corresponds to that between bibliographers and readers in literature. You may be great in the knowledge of the editions of books, or great in the knowledge of the mental wealth of books. If an edition is correct and legible the wants of the student are satisfied; but the book collector prefers a faulty edition if it is rarer, and buys books less because they are good literature than as rare and valuable curiosities. How seldom are great collectors great readers! how still more seldom are they select and critical readers! And so it is in the fine arts; connoisseurship seems little favourable to the study of the minds of great artists. The habit of keenly looking for small facts, and constantly making small observations, diverts the attention from the mighty powers of the immortals.

CHAPTER V.

CRITICISM AND PRACTICAL WORK.

NEITHER amateurship nor connoisseurship is necessarily critical. An amateur is merely a person who loves art, and a connoisseur is a person who knows one thing from another, which need not be on grounds of artistic merit. A critic requires other qualifications.

It has often been asserted, that the labours of artist and theorist are incompatible, and that it is useless to attempt both. By an irresistible instinct, however, some men are driven to do both, and cannot endure to give up either, practice seeming to them to be enlightened and guided by theory, and theory to be most solidly grounded on practice. The two seem like the lame man and the blind man, theory being lame and practice blind; and the lame man in the fable mounted upon the blind man's back, and they both got on well enough.

But it is true that artists, as they are generally constituted and educated, cannot be just critics, though their criticism is usually interesting if the necessary allowance is made, in each case, for the artist's point of view. The world of art is divided into many small states or cliques, each as violently prejudiced against the others as the common people in every nation are against foreigners. International criticism is valuable only if you never forget the nationality of the critic. Englishmen accuse the French of being extravagant and parsimonious in consecutive sentences, which only means that the French spend liberally where

the English spend little, and that by a natural compensation the French are careful where the English are liberal. So if we consider artistic cliques as little nations, we shall find all pure artists national, and criticising other cliques in that national way. But the critic, in reference to cliques, must be cosmopolitan.

Now to be cosmopolitan in the true sense does not mean to be ignorant about what goes on in different nations. A swallow is not cosmopolitan because he flies over many lands; and yet the present tendency of thought about criticism is, that to avoid cliques and their narrowness it must be confided to men who are just as much outside of the art-world as swallows are of the human world.

No person outside of practical art can criticise, and also no practical person living in a narrow clique can criticise *justly*. The true critic is a person who, having lived within the cliques and learned their languages, can get outside of them at any time by an effort of the will, and see them all at about the same distance from himself. He knows them from within, and he knows them from without, both kinds of knowledge being absolutely indispensable to justice.

The merely practical person cannot criticise, because he only knows from within, and is confined to a single clique.

The entirely unpractical person cannot criticise, because he only knows from without.

In the case of etching, you may be a connoisseur without having etched a single plate; but you cannot be a critic unless you have at least *contended* with every difficulty in your own person. It may not be necessary to have overcome the difficulties, but unless you have fought hard with them you can never know them. That is why this book, which is mainly intended to increase the critical knowledge of etching, contains so much practical matter. It is a fixed rule of mine, hitherto scrupulously observed, never to criticise any artistic product without having previously ascertained practically what kind of difficulties the artist had to struggle against. Thus, I never criticised any

work in sculpture, from the belief that as I have modelled very little, and carved not at all, I am necessarily ignorant of the art. And my first preparation for the criticism of etching was to buy fifty copper-plates, and make experiments. If the reader cares to ground his critical knowledge on any solid foundation, he is earnestly recommended to do the same.

CHAPTER VI.

FAVOURABLE AND UNFAVOURABLE ARTISTIC CONDITIONS.

SUCCESS in etching is as much an affair of organization as of artistic superiority. Rembrandt was not a greater artist than Phidias; but Rembrandt was so constituted as to be the very type of etchers, their perfect representative, whereas we may be sure that if Phidias could have tried to etch he would have failed altogether. So amongst living artists, some of the best of them have been unable to etch, though they have tried to do so, and some very imperfect artists have etched well. For example, James Whistler is a strikingly imperfect artist, but he is a fine etcher.

This may seem to imply that etching is an imperfect art, a notion I have already contended against. It only implies that etching is an art which pardons some imperfections in favour of some good qualities. The fact is, that the limits of Whistler as an artist are by no means the limits of the art of etching; that what he does in it is good, but that also other things may be done in etching which are good, and that Whistler cannot do, and never will be able to do. But he has some of the qualities of a great etcher, and as to those qualities which he has not, their absence is not seriously felt, does not much interfere with our enjoyment of the artist's work. For it is the glory of etching that it never exacts completion, never compels an artist to go farther than he safely can go. You must, of course, have certain positive qualities to be able to etch at all; but if you

have these, your want of other qualities is not likely to be painfully felt.

The conditions which are favourable and unfavourable to etching, may be broadly divided under two heads. Lines of study which tend ultimately to *concentration* are so far favourable; lines of study which tend to *elaboration* are unfavourable. It does not signify by how much elaboration your early studies may pass, if they tend steadily to concentration, because you may make very elaborate studies indeed with the deliberate aim of learning how to concentrate powerfully. Some of the most powerful masters of concentration have begun by working elaborately, and gradually eliminated unnecessary detail, till by a long labour of thoughtful omission, they arrived at length at such summary ways of work as best suit the purposes of etching. All that has to be insisted upon is the tendency of an artist's mind and work, not so much what he is doing at any particular time.

Industry cannot make an etcher; it is a question of temperament, with some industry to give manual skill. Slow and methodical temperaments are naturally disqualified for an art which exacts the utmost rapidity and decision. You may know from the pictures of an artist whether he has any chance of becoming an etcher. French painters usually etch sooner and better than Germans; and the English, as might be expected, have facilities which lie somewhere between the two. The French have a true conception of etching as a rapid and comprehensive art; but when, as often happens, there is no genuine individual faculty, they fall into emptiness and idle scrawling. The Germans and English usually fail in another way. When a Frenchman cannot etch, he flourishes about on the copper with vain efforts at brilliance and freedom; when a German cannot etch, he elaborates the most highly-finished and ridiculous compositions. The English have hitherto preferred to fail after the German manner; but it is probable that since the influence of French ideas has been brought

to bear upon us, our bad etchers will fail rather in emptiness of the rapid than the elaborate kind. It signifies nothing whether empty work is rapid or elaborate, for in both cases it is equally worthless; but the French deserve some credit for seeing in a dim way what ought to be aimed at, and the Germans are a little to blame for their wonderful want of perception of the best qualities of the process. It may be remembered that Mr. Whistler is an American by birth, and received his art education in France. Mr. Haden has lived in France also, and has not altogether escaped the influence of French ideas. He is certainly in unison with much French feeling about art, which has been proved by the fact that his works were appreciated in Paris, a rare honour for art-work of any kind done in England.

Sixteen years ago, when our painters were tending to elaboration of the pre-Raphaelite kind, they were going in a direction not likely to qualify them for etching. Now, when they are painting more and more on the principles of abstraction, they are going towards that condition of mind in which men etch well.

It deeply concerns an artist's personal comfort whether, if he attempts to etch, he is so constituted as to be able to etch well naturally. No art is more discouraging to the unqualified aspirant. Etching looks so delightfully easy, that the disappointment at failure is proportionate to the firm confidence in success. A man can draw well, and paint agreeably, so he believes that he will soon be able to etch; and he *does* etch, but somehow nothing that he executes seems to have the right degree of life in it; it is life entangled with rigid sinews of death, and veins in which the blood is coagulated and cold. This is because his artistic constitution does not easily throw off dead and superfluous matter. It throws it off ultimately, or he could not paint, but it does not get rid of it easily and at once; and therefore, for etching, it does not get rid of it in time.

CHAPTER VII.

COMPREHENSIVENESS.

IN the planning of this work, I had given one chapter to abstraction, and another to comprehensiveness, the difficulty being which to put first. It seemed best to put comprehensiveness first, for this reason, that abstraction was likely to be misunderstood without it; for there exist many kinds of abstractions which could only do harm to an etcher, whereas if he once holds the idea of comprehensiveness in all its breadth of meaning, he is safe.

An artist works comprehensively when he grasps his whole subject at once, in all its relations, and works only with reference to the whole. Etching is eminently comprehensive; it does not, like other branches of design, encourage the separation of natural qualities, and the exclusive devotion to one of them. For instance, rigid outline drawing, such as we find on Etruscan vases, is strongly opposed to the spirit of etching, and that not because it is too abstract, but because it excludes facts interesting to etchers, and so is not sufficiently comprehensive. Again, water-colour blotting would be almost as much opposed to etching, though in an opposite direction; for here, though we have light and shade, and though things are seized by the middle instead of by the contour, we now suffer from a want of delicate accentuation of form. If a single stroke in an etching is inserted with reference to form only, and without reference to the general light and shade arrangement of the whole work, that stroke will go

far to ruin it; or if in obedience to exigencies of light and shade it forgets the right accentuation of form, then there will be so much the less of that brilliance and life on which the power of etching so largely depends.

There is the greater need to insist upon comprehensiveness that our painters are not generally remarkable for the possession of it. They too often study things one after another instead of seeing them all at once; and the art of seeing many things at once, is as essential to harmony in painting as the corresponding faculty of hearing many sounds at the same time is to the enjoyment of harmony in music. It is not enough to see the leaf, or even the branch, or the whole tree; we must grasp the entire landscape, or we are powerless. Our artists do sometimes grasp their subjects largely, and then they might succeed if they were not deterred by the feeling that what is called "finish" is indispensable; whereas this finish, when it consists in mere elaboration of parts, is irretrievable ruin. The study of etching may have the happiest influence on the progress of painting itself, for it leads to a conviction that comprehensiveness is the first of artistic necessities. The artist who has it, and keeps it, may add much else to it that is worth having—much delicate and minute observation, much craft of arrangement and subtlety of hand. But for the painter or etcher who has it not, whatever his other attainments, they are of exceedingly little value, because they can never display themselves in the right time and place; but, like the reminiscences of people without tact, are always brought upon the *tapis* when they can create nothing but irritation.

So long as we refer to etching alone, we cannot prove the full value of the great qualities on which success in etching depends. A great etching is the product of a grandly constituted mind; every stroke of it has value exactly proportionate to the mental capacity of the artist; so that a treatise on etching is necessarily a treatise on the mental powers of great men.

Not every reader would see at a glance whether all work

was comprehensive or not, but most men know what comprehensiveness is in other departments of human endeavour. It is the faculty of seeing things in their just relations, the faculty which checks our constant tendency to absorption in narrowing specialities. It keeps our work in due proportion, by constantly reminding us of the true extent of its great field, for it embraces the whole field with its wide vision. We are always tempted to settle in some pleasant nook or corner of our possessions and leave the rest uncultivated; but if we have comprehensiveness, it will not allow us to do this. The most striking characteristic of the comprehensive intellect is its tolerance of necessary local evils and imperfections, its anxiety for great results only, and carelessness of partial success. It is the faculty of generalship, which knows that no battle can be won without sacrifice, and consciously pays a price for its victories.

In ordinary life, much of the narrowness that leads to intolerance and Philistinism comes from the weakness of this faculty. This narrowness is the essence of provincialism, of the prejudices of caste, of that kind of patriotism which is only the provincial spirit on a larger scale. In literature, the want of comprehensiveness leads to an infinite amount of wordy controversy. A hundred writers see a hundred aspects of the truth, and each copiously argues that his own view is the only view worth considering. Want of comprehensiveness is, however, of less consequence in current literature, especially in periodical literature, than in the fine arts, because unity is less necessary in articles than in pictures, or statues, or etchings. Many articles serve the useful purpose of drawing attention to the subjects they treat of, without being in themselves proportioned works of art; they are merely the talk of the day, well expressed and widely circulated. But a picture or an etching is more than this, or at least aspires to be more. It aspires to have artistic value; and there is no artistic value without unity, and unity is the result of comprehensiveness.

But may not unity come from a certain narrowness also? May not the comprehensive intellect, which is alive to so many aspects of things, introduce the fruits of too various observations, and end by producing discord out of its very opulence?

This danger exists so long as an intellect is *becoming* comprehensive, because, in this condition of gradual extension, the newest acquisition always has an exaggerated importance, and is likely to be displayed and insisted upon disproportionately, and even out of season. And there is a narrowness which ensures a relative and unenviable safety; but we are not the less bound to urge the desirableness of cultivating a large and comprehensive spirit. Above all, it should be well understood that etching is not, as some imagine, a fit pastime for small minds; but that, on the contrary, its great glory is to offer the means of powerful and summary expression to the largest. And we may be assured, that for a brief expression to be powerful, it must be concentrated from large masses of acquired knowledge. I know not how many roses are needed for one small phial of precious attar, but I know that there rises from every good etching such a perfume of concentrated thought that a million flowers must have bloomed for it in the garden of some fertile and cultivated mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABSTRACTION.

ETCHING does not proceed so much by abstraction as by comprehensive selection; but abstraction has some place in the art nevertheless, and is to be admitted frankly on certain occasions, and in a modified way very generally.

To understand what abstraction in art is, little more is necessary than a reference to ancient sculpture and design, especially Assyrian or Egyptian. That abstraction was instinctive, and therefore in the best periods as much above criticism as the instinctive labours of the lower animals. What the Egyptian and the Assyrian both did, and what even the more thoughtful Greek did also, though in a more beautiful way, was to take certain facts of nature and leave the rest. The facts which were taken were then treated arbitrarily, or according to the dictates of fixed customs. The facts which were left were no more regarded than if they had never existed.

Abstraction may be of the most opposite kinds. There is the abstraction of a Greek vase, and the abstraction of a blot by David Cox. In the first, outline is the truth preserved, and effect the truth sacrificed; in the second, outline is sacrificed and effect preserved. And there are abstractions within abstraction. Thus, in outline work we may purposely eliminate all lines that are expressive of softness and feebleness, so as to give a character of severity to our

work; or we may eliminate the lines of strength, and lend a yet greater languor to those of tenderness and voluptuousness. And in the modern blot for effect we may be taking one set of tones or another, since complete imitation of tones is as impossible as complete imitation of lines, and artists take what they want of each, and that only.

Now the kinds of abstraction commonly resorted to in etching, are two. First, when an etcher knows that his art cannot really imitate, he resorts to abstraction, and boldly interprets. Secondly, when he could get nearer to imitation if he chose to spend the time, but does not choose, then also he works in an abstract manner.

If there is a strong probability that your technical skill will not carry you through some difficult bit of imitation, give us rather a piece of abstraction, however rude, which may show that you have understood the thing to be rendered. In the works of great etchers, there is every conceivable shade of gradation, from the most marvellous imitation to the strongest abstraction. Even in the same plate we may often trace varieties of this kind. Imitative finish may be given to some central point of interest, and the execution of the rest of the work may become more and more frankly abstract till it reaches, in the outline of some cloud or distance, an abstraction as great in its way as that of an Assyrian bas-relief.

Abstraction does not appear to be a rare power. Everybody is in the habit of exercising it in common life. It is a common means of making things intelligible, and abstract drawing is usually more intelligible to uneducated persons, than the art which attempts a full rendering of nature. When we teach children to draw, we begin, as the Egyptians did, with rude, firm outlines; when we narrate events to simple people, we follow the same method, and purposely leave out all delicate and complicated considerations. It is not the abstraction of etching that makes it unintelligible to the people, but the complexity of the truths which it attempts to interpret simultaneously. A strong outline

that goes all round its subject, though to the feeling of an etcher usually detestable, would be easily understood, but a fragmentary line which only indicates a quarter of a contour, and that probably not the real contour after all, and which hints half a dozen things, is likely, in the eyes of most people, to mean exactly nothing.

CHAPTER IX.

SELECTION.

ABSTRACTION is, of course, a kind of selection, but it is not the kind of selection that I desire to speak of here.

Abstraction is too analytic a selection for our present purpose. The artist who abstracts does not make a summary of the whole truth before him, but takes out a truth, and sets it forth in as evident a way as he possibly can, in a much more evident way than nature's. He acts as an anatomist who, having killed a wild animal for the sake of its skeleton only, tore away every fibre of musele and threw it to his dogs; after which he set himself to clean the bones by boiling them, and, being installed in his museum, erected his white and perfect bone structure without a thought of the flesh that the dogs devoured. This is abstraction—a process of analysis followed by many rejections and few reserves.

The selection of which I would now speak is synthetic, and its object is to remain synthetic to the utmost possible extent. It does not try to detach one truth from its fellows, but to give the sum of all the truths. By means of this synthetic selection a master in etching will fully convey the ideas of structure, of light and shade, and of local colour with the same set of touches. The more complex the expression, and the simpler the means used, the greater will be the power of the master.

In the infinite treasuries of natural truth some orders of fact are better suited to etching than others are, and,

although the comprehensiveness of the great etcher makes him alive to all these orders of fact, his judgment in selection leads him to decided preferences. He desires to be as synthetic as possible in his view, and as broadly receptive, yet he knows the limitations of his art; and though anxious to express the sum of all the truths, is obliged in selection to look with especial care for the kind of truth which etching renders best. This is done, however, in the case of every truly noble etcher, in simple prudence, not from pride—sometimes indeed from real humility, as when a master does not like his own more elaborate renderings of certain truths, and prefers to indicate them by some rapid and seemingly careless interpretation, in which, if there is any contempt at all, it is not of nature, but of the artist's own poverty of resource.

On some spots on the coast of England, especially, if I remember well, on the north shore, beyond the castle at Scarborough, there are sands mixed with fine particles of iron. The children take magnets with them there, and so separate the iron from the grains of sand. They want the iron, they do not want the sand, and they are fortunate in possessing an almost magical implement, which at a touch separates the one from the other.

So acts the selecting genius of great etchers. Though truly comprehensive and synthetic, and quite remote in general feeling from the abstraction of Assyrian sculptors, they find, nevertheless, in nature certain treasures to them especially precious, and which they easily draw to themselves by a constant and sublime magnetism. He who has not the magnet cannot select in this unerring way. You cannot teach selection of this kind; you may talk and write till you are weary, but you will not advance one student a step nearer to the mysterious and instinctive power of choice, which is the privilege of genius alone.

All that can be done, all that in such a treatise as this any writer can be expected to do, is to remind readers if they know it already, and tell them if they do not, that

this selection is essential to all good etching, this lordly and high choice, which is authorized by the most comprehensive knowledge of the wealth of nature.

But selection, I may be told, even selection of this synthetic kind, is equally necessary in painting, and therefore need not be treated of here, in a book devoted to what belongs peculiarly to etching. It is necessary in all painting, except in the abstract schools which reject it in favour of abstraction, but it is far more important, relatively to other qualities, in this more rapid and summary art of etching. If a painter cannot select at once, he gets the superfluities out of his work by a slow and painful process, like a long malady, or hides them under equally superfluous elaboration. But an etcher who cannot select rapidly is lost.

CHAPTER X.

SENSITIVENESS.

I FIND that great etchers are decidedly a more sensitive body of men than line engravers, and more generally sensitive than some celebrated painters. Certain schools of painting have definitely encouraged insensitiveness to whole orders of truth, under the pretext of style; but etching being an obscure and neglected art, has fortunately been too much despised by the professors of the grand style to be very actively injured by them. If any student, however, chooses to take Agostino Caracci for his model, he may, no doubt, arrive at insensitiveness even in etching.

Sensitiveness in ordinary life is so often spoken of as a weakness or a fault, so often attributed to morbid conditions, that it is needful to claim a right consideration for a kind of sensitiveness, which is neither a fault, nor a weakness, nor a disease. The work of the great men is usually at the same time both exquisitely sensitive, and capable of demonstrations of strength so overpowering, that it seems brutal to minds which have neither its tenderness nor its force. The softer intellects are not rough in this noble way, and so they resent the strong markings of the great etchers as a kind of affront to their own refinement; but, on the other hand, neither have they the etcher's exquisite sensitiveness, and though it does not irritate them as the apparent coarseness does, it gets no recognition from them, and remains outside their estimate of the artist.

Whoever aspires to be an etcher should try to be sensitive in the best sense. True sensitiveness is not disease, but the highest life of the purest health. It is easily lost, in the turmoil of the common world, or so far injured as to leave nothing but an occasional capability of noble pleasure. How are we to keep it if we have it? It may be lost in too busy intercourse with men, but so also it dies in the dull apathy of long solitude, and the shepherd on Ben Cruachan has as little of it as the apprentice in the Strand. Its most fatal enemies are over-stimulus, and deficiency of stimulus.

In great capitals, the over-stimulus comes in a hundred forms. One very injurious form of it is too many pictures and prints. We will not rail against exhibitions, since they are inevitable, and the best method hitherto devised for the publication of new paintings; but it is well to guard ourselves against the invasion of mere quantity. No man living can really study more than ten fresh works of art a day; he may glance at more in order to select the ten, but he cannot study more. Who would expect any one to read more than ten volumes a day? And is there not as much in a painting or etching that really deserves to be studied as in most volumes? Londoners and Parisians seem to have extensive views of the quantity of art a man may digest in a given time; and so far as I have been able to calculate, they expect a critic to make up his mind on two hundred pictures per day, with a stiff volume on æsthetics, and a new book-illustrator every evening.

Errors in this direction may be avoided if we remember that the mind has a digestion just as the body has, and that it can only take in a certain limited quantity of aliment in the twenty-four hours. Excesses are paid for by a loss of tone, a loss of sensitiveness, a loss of appetite. Then both art and nature lose their charm, and good work cannot even be enjoyed, far less executed.

In the country, on the other hand, from the want of fresh stimulus in the sufficiently frequent sight of new

works, people fall into that mortal dulness which is one of the well-known marks of provincialism. It is admitted amongst artists that no painter can absent himself very long from capital cities without declining in power; and even landscape painters, whose material lies in Alpine valleys or Highland glens, pass regularly some considerable portion of the year in the ugliest capital in Europe.

The best life is that which includes both town and country, and does not, in either, allow itself to be invaded and overwhelmed by quantity, either of art or nature. The powers of one man in the presence of the immense accumulations of the race, must always be infinitely little, and an individual human being can no more study all the art in the world than he can eat all the food in the world. Etching is a pleasanter study in this respect of quantity than painting is, for the number of etchers is limited; and since the art has never received great encouragement, few artists have left great quantities of etchings behind them. The danger to the sensitiveness of etchers is not so much from seeing too many etchings as too many pictures.

In beautiful scenery the faculties may be dulled by too much nature, as well as too much art. Amongst great mountains we are especially exposed to a spirit of reverie, which makes us gaze for ever and do nothing. What we can do seems so little, what they *are* so much, that we are likely to fall into contemplative indolence, unless roused by the ardour of scientific research, or the necessity for money-getting. Neither of these motives leads to the study of etching, and there is always some probability that an etcher who should persistently absent himself from fine collections, and live in the midst of a too magnificent nature, would injure his artistic sensitiveness, by too much stimulus of the one kind and too little of the other.

CHAPTER XI.

EMPHASIS.

IN all human communication, when there is energy enough to move men, there is emphasis—in oratory, in literature, in acting, in painting, in common daily talk, in music, even in the pantomime of gesture.

All emphasis in design is, and must be, a departure from the rigid truth. Emphasis with pencil or etching needle is the exaggeration of some point which has powerfully struck the artist, or to which he intends to direct the attention of the spectator. And such exaggerations are departures from the truth in more ways than one; they obscure other facts, and destroy the equilibrium of nature. Yet a design without emphasis would be uninteresting, except as a curiosity; it would certainly have no interest as art. Any human communication in which the strict order and proportion of nature should be followed would fail of its effect upon mankind. The principle is, that you are not to tell mankind all that has occurred, but what it concerns them to know. Now in every event of history, and in every natural scene, there are millions of minute facts which nobody cares about or needs to care about—facts which, if narrated, would only overcharge the hearer's memory uselessly, and hinder him from giving due attention to the great points. Your time and his being limited, you tell him what seems to you of most importance; and to impress this on his mind, you drive it home with a hearty thrust of emphasis, like a man charging a gun. Artists do exactly the same thing, and etchers

especially, for a particular reason. The more elaborate a work is, the less, as a general rule, is emphasis resorted to, because, when there is time to make a full exposition of a matter, there is the less need for violence in statement. If you have to reply to an adversary in one sentence, you make it a biting epigram; if you have an hour before you, it tells better to demolish him with studied moderation. Now the etchers, in comparison to the painters, are not accustomed to lengthy utterances. To be brief and go to the point at once is a quality which they aim at. This brevity naturally leads to an emphatic manner of work, and it may be observed that the same etcher who strongly emphasizes in a rapid sketch on the copper is far more sober in statement when he works on a laboured plate.

But there is a kind of emphasis, necessary to all etching, even the most laboured, and which readily escapes attention. It is the delicate accentuation that lives in every stroke, like the caressing bow-pressures of an accomplished violinist. You think there is no emphasis at all, that the etcher has been telling you plain facts in a plain way, and yet you have been interested and pleased. If you have been interested, it is quite certain that there must have been emphasis; the simple truth would have left you cold. And yet you are interested in nature, and there is no emphasis *there*. Very true, but there was emphasis in the way you looked at nature; your emotion supplied then what the emotion of the artist must supply for you in art.

And might not a spectator's emotion in the presence of a literally true etching supply a kind of emphasis also, as it would before nature?

It might perhaps, but it never does. No strictly accurate drawing that I have ever seen has had the power to move a single spectator. Accurate work—that is, work without emphasis—is always passed by with indifference. It does not tell men what to look for, or why they are to look at all, and so they do not feel under any obligation to look. An artist is a person who undertakes, or ought to under-

take, to establish a human communication between nature and mankind; and all good human communication is preceded by selection and enforced by emphasis.

Yet we must not be too emphatic. With cultivated people the most effectual emphasis is very subtle and delicate, avoiding violence, and seeming rather to arise from the courteous wish to spare trouble to the audience, than from any eagerness to compel attention. If an artist will listen to the best conversation that is to be had, and also to the best music, he may safely carry so much emphasis as he will have heard there into his own practice. There is a difference between such just and necessary stress as this, and the violence of bad manners and bad art.

CHAPTER XII.

PASSION.

THE mechanical labours of the line engraver, extending sometimes over several years on a single plate, require industry and steadiness rather than passion. No passionate temperament could easily bring itself to make careful lines with a burin when the only result of a thousand days spent in such work should be a translation of another man's thought. Great skill is needed, and infinite patience and care, but no tormenting and disturbing emotion. Hence the best line engravers seem to be either men of cold temperament originally, or who have learned the necessity for coolness in their art, reserving the fire that is in them for other studies, or for their amusements.

But with the etcher these conditions of success are reversed, at least in the order of their importance. He needs, no doubt, some manual skill, some patience, and a moderate amount of care, but these avail him nothing if they are accompanied by the engraver's coldness. The one capacity which makes all his other powers available is the capacity for passionate emotion. To feel vividly, to be possessed for a few hours by some overmastering thought, and record the thought before the fire has time to die out of it—this is the first condition of success in etching.

Therefore all schools of art which try to suppress passion are injurious to etching, and nobody can be an etcher who

either belongs to them or believes their doctrines. The classical school in figure painting, and the topographic school in landscape, have never produced a good etcher. Of course neither of these schools set itself to the suppression of *all* passion, for the classical designers have illustrated scenes of very strong passion indeed, and even the topographic landscape painters have, or had at the beginning, a passionate devotion to topographic truth; but they have both encouraged a cold indifference to much that no etcher can afford to regard coldly. The classical figure painters, in the pursuit of a learned ideal, taught themselves to despise the aspects of the common world, and to this day have a lofty contempt for every artist who is humble enough and intelligent enough to take an interest in it. The topographers, on the other hand, though they make an exception in favour of Turner, whose genius they recognise, regard the deviations from literal truth which, in the works of less famous painters, are due to genuine passion, as a want of conscientiousness and a blameable laxity of principle.

The student who desires to etch is earnestly recommended to keep clear of all doctrine which endeavours to chill his feeling in any way. To etch well, an artist hardly *can* be too passionate in his likings. Etch what impresses you, and *as* it impresses you, and let no theorists poison your mind with the virus of a morbid conscientiousness.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRANKNESS.

ETCHING is eminently a straightforward art, which is one great reason for its unpopularity. People do not like plain lines that tell rude truths; they prefer fancy arrangements. No good etcher will condescend to fancy arrangements.

The delightfulness of etching, to us who care for it, is especially this frankness. No art is so entirely honest; painting and engraving have almost always some questionable ingredient of attractiveness, some prettiness or polish to suit wide-spread but lamentable tastes. The etchers, with few exceptions, have not attempted to make themselves agreeable in this way, probably from a conviction that their art is so inherently unpopular that it would be of no use. The consequence is; that of all artists they are the most simple and direct. They are as cunning, and crafty, and subtle as you will in the artifices of method, but it is an honest cunning that aims only at qualities really worth having; and if these can be reached in a simple way, the simple way is always preferred. In saying that etching is an especially honest art, I mean that it does not resort to apparently difficult ways of doing easy things, in order to get credit for difficulties overcome. On the contrary, it is remarkable for preferring apparently simple ways of doing difficult things. So unpretending is it, that the masterpieces of the art attract no attention from the general public, and people who cluster in a close group round a

showy picture, will pass without a glance the most exquisite expression of an aquafortist.

Etched lines look coarse and awkward very often, the lines of shading seem irregular, pains are not taken to hide the errors of the artist; sometimes he roughly corrects, and lets you see that he has corrected. It happens even that defects in the varnish have been allowed to remain in the bitten copper, and print themselves on every proof taken. Etchers seem to be an idle, careless set of men, who do not finish properly. They are not sufficiently polished not in harmony with the usages of society. These wayward, eccentric strokes of theirs show a too rampant and irrepressible individualism; if they would learn to shade evenly as the engravers do, and make neat curves and lozenges, would it not be much better? Frankness may be well on due occasion, but we may have too much of it.

This is the way many people feel about the frankness of etching, if they do not say so.

CHAPTER XIV.

SPEED.

IN the letter-press which accompanied Mr. Haden's etchings a letter of his was quoted, in which he spoke of the advantages of etching an entire plate at one sitting. The unity of impression so obtained was, Mr. Haden thought, an important gain, and enough to counterbalance much elaboration. Looking through Mr. Haden's own etchings by the light of this expression of opinion, we find some which may have been finished at one sitting and others which must have required a longer time. It will be found in practice that a sketch on copper may be effectively done in a sitting, but that an etching in which the full resources of the process are brought to bear will occupy several sittings. It may be also observed that when an etching, supposed to be executed at once, is afterwards corrected and carried through several states, the sittings required for these corrections ought to be taken into account, and that it is not accurate to class such a plate amongst plates etched at one sitting. If this is strictly attended to, it will be found that an exceedingly small proportion of etchings have really been executed in the way Mr. Haden advocates.

It is right, however, to insist on a certain value in mere rapidity. A rapid stroke, when not so rapid as to miss the necessary modulations, is generally better than a slow one, and a concise expression preferable to a diffuse expression. The way to attain true speed is to spend a

great deal of time in looking, and having decided upon the strokes to be laid, lay them at once, and leave them. It is told of John Phillip, that when he painted he showed no sign of hurry, but would look hard at nature and then lay a few firm touches, not to be disturbed, and that in this careful way he was really getting his picture forward rapidly. So in etching, there should be no unthinking haste, but every line should be determined upon before it is made.

A good principle to remember is, that for an etching to look fresh we must avoid weariness. This is why Mr. Haden recommends a single sitting; it seems to him that the freshness of the mind, its first virgin impression of a subject, may be kept three or four hours, but not very much longer. Before the mind acknowledges fatigue it loses its keen interest in the subject which occupies it, and this keen interest is what we have mainly to rely upon for the vivacity of our work. A jaded etcher is sure to spoil his plate. Without making a rule to etch only plates of one sitting, which would confine us to sketching, it is quite necessary to stop before the mind wanders or goes on another tack. The plate, if not yet sufficiently advanced to be printed, may be laid aside and completed at some future time, when the freshness of interest in it may return to us. If this freshness should not return, the plate is better abandoned.

CHAPTER XV.

MOTIVES.

THE motive of a picture is not so much material as spiritual. It is a certain condition of the mind, produced by the subject, and which the artist in rendering that subject desires to reproduce in the minds of spectators. This is the reason why great artists so often choose subjects which seem trifling, and also why Philistinism always misunderstands and despises art. What a great landscape painter attempts to render is not the natural landscape, but the state of feeling which the landscape produces in himself. Since etching is especially an art of *feeling*, an art in which feeling is supreme and mechanism nowhere, it is very important that the etcher should be able to enter into the true conception of artistic motives.

A motive should never be valued according to the popular estimate of its importance, nor even by the effect it may produce on some other artist. If you listen to the people, you may be prevented from studying in some region quite full of good motives; it seems barren and uninteresting to them, and they will make you believe that it is barren. So even an accomplished artist may mislead you by his report of a place; he may find nothing there suitable to his own idiosyncrasy, and yet for you it may be full of treasure. The converse of this is also true, though not quite to the same extent. A district may be popular, it may even be very attractive to some good painters, and yet you may not find there what you want. This, however, is

likely to occur more rarely, because if a district is popular there is sure to be either sublimity or beauty in it; and although it may not be the particular sublimity or beauty which most closely touches you, it is always probable that some phase of these will awaken your interest.

Every artist has theories about the choice of subjects which are merely personal and do not concern others, yet he believes them to be universally applicable. We have to guard ourselves against the strong personal feeling of our artist-friends, especially when it expresses itself in negation and discouragement. They are always ready to say that subjects are unfit for pictorial treatment when they are not in harmony with their own personal constitution. Almost anything is a subject, but it only becomes a motive when an artist is moved by it. An etcher ought never to care about subjects, but should etch motives only.

To do this, requires great faith, great confidence in our feelings and impressions. This faith is assailed on every side by the scepticism of people who do not see as the artist sees; but he should not let these attacks disturb him. Other people do not see what he sees, because they are not himself; but if he is quite faithful to his own impressions he will gain sympathy in the long run, not from everybody, but from those who are near enough to him to enter into his ideas.

One of the great advantages which result from perfect fidelity to motive is the unity of each piece of work when it leaves the etcher's hand. Under the impulse of a feeling he has produced a work, and the feeling will have fused the material into a whole. What we most need for unity is an unreserved surrender to our impression, a simple faith that what has moved us is worth recording, however poor and uninteresting it may seem.

And as submission to every real motive is a duty, so is resistance and rebellion against false motives and half-motives which are only subjects. There are endless beauties and sublimities which do not make our innermost

chords vibrate; we just admire them, and that is all. The condition of mind which tries to etch a subject from a cool acknowledgment that it is good material, is as widely remote from the condition of a noble etcher as flirtation from passionate love.

This faith in our own personality is not vanity, it is not a blameable excess of self-confidence, but merely a right understanding of the necessities of art. It may even arise from a kind of modesty which will not attempt things out of its own province. There is a close connexion between true modesty and self-respect, and etchers ought to cultivate both. They should have modesty enough to hinder them from attempting things merely from ambition, because other men have done them and become famous, and they should have self-respect enough to have a full though quiet conviction of the value of their own feelings and impressions. In this state of mind an artist finds something more and better than mere subjects, and nature abounds for him in motives.

ETCHING AND ETCHERS.

BOOK II.

THE ENGLISH SCHOOL.

CHAPTER I.

PRESENT STATE OF THE ART IN ENGLAND.

IF the English school of etching derived from past art any visible or traceable affiliation, I would have begun with an account of the ancestral schools to which it owed its existence. But beyond the bare fact that the process came to them from the Continent, the English do not, as etchers, belong to the European community. There is an apparent relationship between their work and German work, but this is merely a result of some similarity of mental constitution, and is so far from implying imitation, or even derivation from the same origins, that our etchers have neither any relation of brotherhood with the modern Germans, nor of sonship to their forefathers. English etching, like English painting, is a product of the English soil, intensely and exclusively insular, and a result of many complex conditions, some of which it will be my business to indicate.

This being so, I may begin with the art of my own country. If a writer on the art of painting wished to give to his foreign readers some idea of the condition of painting in England, he would describe the public institutions which exist for the support of painting, and speak of the large encouragement given to it by a numerous and wealthy class of buyers. The English school of etching has no public institution of any kind, and its supporters amongst the public are few. No public recognition or reward has ever yet been accorded

in England to an etcher. A few artists, whose incomes are derived either from private fortune or painting in oil or water-colour, have banded themselves together in a friendly little club, which for many years has occasionally met at dinner in the houses of its members, and which from time to time has issued works illustrated by them. The form into which English etching has mainly run is book-illustration; vignettes of careful and minute execution, illustrative of national poets, have been printed along with the verse. There has been no attempt to render these publications of etchings periodical, and there has never been any exhibition of etchings by living artists. It is believed that the only exhibition of etchings which has hitherto taken place in England was that of the Rembrandts, at the Burlington Club, in the summer of 1867, and even this was not open to the public generally, but only to the friends of the members, and visitors introduced by them. The Royal Academy accepts etchings, and etchers are fairly treated there, but the little octagon room where etchings and engravings are hung is the worst room in the Academy for the acquisition of reputation. It is exceedingly small, just large enough for an author's private study, and an author might write in it all day long with little fear of interruption, except from visitors who come to inquire the price of a picture, and go straight out again. Yet this little room, of which three-fourths of the wall-space are already occupied by engravings, is more than enough for all the good etchings of the year. In the least room's least corner this great art obscurely dwells. There is a printed direction to visitors outside, without which it is thought that they would be likely to miss the little octagon room altogether, and this placard bears the word *Engravings* in capital letters, and the two words "and etchings" written underneath in pencil. How curiously this typifies the condition of the two arts! "Engravings" in big black capitals, rigid, official, formal, mechanical, impersonal, mindless, but

readable by everybody; "and etchings" written with a pencil in free autograph, every rapid sweep and curve of the point an indication of temperament and will, but not official and authoritative like the big printed capitals, and not likely to be seen and read by so many people.

I felt touched by the kindness of the Academy, when, in the year 1866, I first read this little inscription in pencil. It was a recognition of the art I loved, tardy perhaps, and not quite so generous as it might have been, for it seemed to begrudge half-a-crown for the setting of the type; yet even this recognition, such as it was, gave me a little thrill of pleasure, and I hoped to see the day when the word "etching" might appear with all the honours of typography. It turned out, however, that the pencil inscription had not been added by academical authority, but by a well-known lover of etching, and enemy of academies in general, who wrote it, as he said, "to let the people know that the art was in existence."

I have never been able to ascertain that an etching has been *bought* at the Academy. It appears that no one ever enquires the price of an etching exhibited there.

With the exception of such illustrations as those of Doyle, Cruikshank, Phiz, and others, made for popular novels, and usually of a decidedly comic or facetious character, I have never heard of any commission being given in England for an etching, and I believe it may be safely asserted that no English publisher has ever yet commissioned an etching as a work of art. Almost every other multipliable kind of art has been liberally encouraged; engraving on copper and steel and wood, lithography, photography, and even experimental substitutes for wood-engraving, have been paid for in quantities more or less considerable; but when etchers publish their works, it is at their own expense.

Now, this commercial detail, that etchers have to publish on commission, is enough of itself to ruin their enterprises. Publishers ought to have before their eyes not only the

hope of profit, but the fear of loss; in their own enterprises there is this double stimulant, but when they publish at the author's expense the fear of loss does not trouble them, and though they may have the best intentions, and really mean to act well and honourably by an author who has trusted them, their attention is naturally called more frequently to works which cause them anxiety, and the works which cause anxiety to publishers are those whose failure will entail a penalty. It would be better for an etcher that publishers should pay heavily for his plates, even if he handed the money to a charity, than that they should not pay for them at all. The following anecdote, on the exactness of which the reader may absolutely rely, will show the kind of neglect to which etchers are exposed, and the difficulty of issuing their works with fair chances of success.

An English etcher, of respectable ability, made a series of plates, which he showed to a publisher of his acquaintance, asking whether he would undertake to issue them, and on what terms. The publisher was really pleased with the etchings, and praised them very cordially, adding that he would gladly undertake the publication. The terms were, that the work should be entirely printed at the artist's expense, that the publisher did not undertake to advertise, and that the artist should receive exactly half the price the public paid for the work, the remaining fifty per cent. being divided in nearly equal proportions between the publisher and the retail trade. The simple business of shopkeeping absorbed, as the reader observes, as much of the buyer's money as the whole production of the work of art; but the expenses of shopkeeping in large cities are so very considerable, that the estimate here could scarcely be considered unjust. It was understood, however, that the publisher would make some effort to help the work, that he would at least show it to his personal friends, and offer it to the retail trade. The work was printed, and a certain quantity of copies were placed in the publisher's

hands, after which the artist left the country for a short time, on a professional tour. On his return, he happened to want a copy to give to a friend, and went to the publisher for it. The etchings were not to be seen in the shop, nor any announcement of them; the shopmen knew nothing about them, they could not find a copy, they only knew that none had been sold; the publisher was absent, the etcher was requested to call again. When he did so, a search was made, and the parcel of etchings was discovered, unopened, in a cupboard in an upper storey, ten feet from the floor. It might have remained there forty years before a single member of the outer world had become aware of the existence of the work. The artist simply took the parcel home in a cab, and transferred it to a cupboard of his own, where, as he tells his friends, the publicity is equally great, and there it still remains.

If the words "to publish" mean "to make public," surely this is not publishing. But if, instead of the uncertain hope of profit in case of effort and care, there had been the certainty of loss in case of no effort and no care, we may be very sure that the etchings would not have remained in that cupboard. And here is the difficult point which etching has to get over before it can be forced on the attention of the public. Publishers must be brought to invest money in it. It is the old difficulty of dual and interdependent conditions which is always recurring in human affairs. As a musician must be famous to get an opera performed, and must get an opera performed to be famous; as a poor man must have capital to make money, and must make money to have capital; so etching must be popular before publishers will invest in it, and publishers must invest in it before it will be popular.*

* The most painful and frequent form of the interdependence of dual conditions is when a man must have money to get health (by rest and care) and must have health to get money.

But why should not an etcher print his own plates at home, and sell them directly to his customers, who might thus economize fifty per cent., just as a painter sells his pictures? This question occurs sometimes to simple artists and their friends, who do not know the ways of mankind in this generation. The temper of the public is so very averse to direct transactions with the makers of things, and is becoming so much more so every day, that middlemen are indispensable. Early in this year I opened the question of picture dealing in the *Saturday Review*, in the "Pictures of the Year," and showed that so long as buyers would rather give five hundred pounds to a dealer for a picture than three hundred for the same picture to the artist, the dealer was necessary to the artist himself. If buyers dislike dealing with artists, so artists have equal reason to dislike direct communication with buyers. The two classes distrust each other: the buyer fears that he will not get his money's worth, and when the commissioned picture arrives there is always a probability that something about it may be different from what was expected, and cause disappointment. On the other hand, the artist not only foresees the possibility of this disappointment, but, knowing how rare is a critical knowledge of art, and how much even a true critic may be biassed by his personal tastes, distrusts the judgment of the buyer. But between an artist and a dealer, there is scarcely a chance of misunderstanding. The dealer is already perfectly familiar with the artist's capacity and range, and when he commissions a picture, is seldom disappointed. The artist and dealer understand each other, and waste little time in discussion or correspondence. The dealer is wider and more catholic in his judgment than the amateur; he does not buy to suit the taste of one person, but to suit all tastes, and a picture which might not gratify him as a private purchaser is satisfactory to him as a merchant, if only he knows that it will not remain long on his hands.

The only commissions which may be said to be given

beforehand for etchings, by the public, are in the case of periodical issues, when the plates not yet issued may be considered as commissioned on the faith in the capacity of the artist. But instances of this kind are exceedingly rare, and etchings are seldom sold to any amateur before he has seen them. One great difficulty of direct purchasing is, therefore, usually absent. Suppose, for instance, that an etcher exhibits in the Royal Academy, there appears to be no reason why an amateur should not order a copy of his plate, and order it of the etcher himself; but in this case we are met by the repugnance to direct dealing which is characteristic of our time, and also by the resistance of habit. Paintings may be bought of the men who make them, though this custom is on the decline, but printed things are usually bought neither of the author, nor of the printer, but of a publisher. Let me illustrate this by a reference to the book trade. An author made an arrangement with a publisher, by which he was to be paid for the first edition of his first work in copies. He and his publisher started fairly together as salesmen of the book. At the end of two years the publisher had sold eight hundred and eighty copies, the author had sold exactly one copy, and had never been able to sell another. The reader has bought the present volume through the usual channel; but if I had printed it at my own expense, and kept copies in my own house, and advertised that I would send a copy of the book to anybody on receipt of a post-office order for *half* its present price, I should not have sold a dozen. Now, to writers and painters the aversion to direct dealing cannot be considered a misfortune. If the public takes a pleasure in giving Mr. Gambart or Mr. Wallis large sums of money for pictures, the painters need not complain, for they themselves get more money and much more fame through the mediation of dealers than they could without them. If the public likes to encourage retail and wholesale bookselling, it also at the same time in-

directly encourages authorship. If the public will not buy of the painter or the author, the dealer and publisher will, so that painters and writers can practise their arts and live by them. But etchers cannot sell either directly or indirectly. Engraving is a popular art; but if engravers could not sell their plates to print-publishers, their profession could not exist, for the public would never go out of its way to order engravings of the engravers themselves. An eminent engraver, who though his publishers has long enjoyed competence and reputation, told me that if he were even now to publish a plate on his own account, he would not be able to sell an edition of it.

Now, so long as etching remains in this condition, it cannot be a prosperous art. And those who wish it the success to which its admirable powers and august traditions entitle it, are anxious to discover a remedy.

It cannot be said that the art of etching has ever been without a public of its own, but the misfortune is the smallness of this public, and the prevalence, within its own ranks, of the spirit of curiosity rather than the love of art. This spirit of curiosity, which brings together so many collections, is not only different from the artistic and critical spirits, but it is directly inimical to both of them. An artist values work for such artistic quality as may be in harmony with his own constitution; a critic values it on broader artistic and intellectual grounds; but a curiosity-hunter values it for rarity alone. And since the work of living men is seldom rare or curious, and has not had time to be fought over by excited collectors in public sales, it is never, or hardly ever, valued by the large class which collects from curiosity. One great step towards the establishment of modern etching would therefore be attained, if intelligent collectors would openly repudiate the spirit of curiosity, and collect avowedly on high artistic and critical grounds, without the least reference to rarity. The love of rarities is not only not

artistic, not intellectual, but it is not even morally respectable. It is based on the vice of egotism; the satisfactions which it enjoys are not the joys of possession, but a mean exultation in the knowledge that others do not possess. The wild extravagance to which it leads, proves, not its love of art, but its indifference to art. No man's income is illimitable; the annual sum set apart for etching must always have a limit somewhere, and, when a collector spends extravagantly for curiosity, he deprives himself of some power of spending for art.

Another misfortune for etching is the tendency of publishing houses to look for immediate profits, so that they do not venture to invest for the future. There are exceptions to this rule, but the exceptions are more in the bookselling than in the printselling business. There are publishers of books who will give an author access to the public in hopes of his ultimate fame, but printsellers usually trade for immediate returns, and engrave the most popular art in the most popular manner. If some rich firm would take up etching as a speciality, as M. Cadart did a few years ago in Paris, buying only the best modern plates, but buying them all at good prices, and so getting the art into his hands, the speculation would be ultimately though not immediately remunerative. The misfortune of M. Cadart's attempt in this direction was, that his firm had not capital enough to do this thoroughly. With the best intentions, he was not nearly severe enough, nor could he spend so largely as would be necessary to keep the art in high condition. The most skilful etchers fail often, and a success, even when there is only two hours' work in it, should be paid for so handsomely as to cover the time lost in failures. A firm that determined to give from fifty to a hundred pounds for every good plate offered to it, and nothing for second-rate work, would, if it knew good work from bad, exercise the kind of influence which is needed. To borrow Topffer's simile, art is like a plant, which requires to be watered.

But if etching in England is in a low condition, the fault is not entirely in the apathy of collectors, or the timidity of publishers: the etchers themselves are to blame. The English school, with a few notable exceptions, has sought to make the art pretty and popular rather than great; our etchers have not been faithful to the spirit of etching; they have condescended too much to the level of the common public. Let it be understood, once for all, that this great art, if followed in the true spirit, must for ever be as far above the vision and criticism of the vulgar as an eagle's flight above the cackling of fowls in a farmyard. The great etchers live in a region where the common people cannot follow; the people cannot decipher their writing; there is no communication from one to the other. And between these two a choice has to be made—between greatness and nobleness on the one hand, or prettiness and some slight chance of popularity on the other. The English school has not aimed at greatness, except in one or two notable instances; it has aimed at popularity, and it is not even popular.

What is the use of condescension? All experience shows that it is only degrading. If your public is not educated enough for manly work, leave it to its own childishness, to its neatness and softness, and polish and glitter. But let your own art remain man's work; and if there be but one male left on the effeminate earth, work for him only!

In justice to English etchers, let it be added that the too prevalent littleness of their manner and aim is not so much to be attributed to themselves, as to the country and age they live in. The last qualities in an artist which are cared for or applauded in general English society, are precisely the artistic qualities. His wit and intelligence, his knowledge of human nature, his observation of the ways of animals, his faithful study of landscape—in other words, his powers as dramatist or naturalist—are handsomely and generously allowed; but the purely artistic

gifts are scarcely so much as considered in the popular estimate of him. Our art is literary or scientific rather than artistic, and in the present state of the public mind it seems to be almost useless to insist upon the artistic qualities, because such words as the critic can use in speaking of them convey no meaning to the majority of readers. This side of art, the most interesting to the true critic, is dreaded as "technical" by the public which he addresses. If he insists upon it, he is said to "talk shop," and is reminded that "shop" may be very well amongst artists, but should be avoided in intercourse with the world. Hence, a kind of criticism has arisen in England which has much scientific and intellectual interest, but as applied to plastic art is often superfluous and beside the mark. The direction of purchasing in England is as injurious as the direction of criticism. Pictures are bought for all sorts of reasons except artistic reasons, and men who are exceedingly intelligent, and full of various information, avail themselves of painting as a means of expression for their knowledge and their wit, without making artistic quality their object. It is not the purpose of the present volume to show the effects of this condition of things on contemporary painting, but its effect upon etching has been injurious in the extreme, because etching is peculiarly an artist's art; that is, an art fitted for the expression of ideas which are eminently and peculiarly artistic. In a time when artistic ideas are either not understood, or held to be secondary to literary and scientific ideas, there will be found a littleness and a timidity in the work of the few who etch, because the spirit prevalent amongst their contemporaries does not encourage a frank reliance upon artistic qualities.

CHAPTER II.

TURNER.

IN a work devoted exclusively to etching, it may be thought that artists ought to be studied only in their etchings; but I find that their labours in other departments of art throw light upon their etchings themselves, and when a painter has done great things on copper, it is always interesting to know what he has done on canvas. There is no difficulty here with regard to Turner; his pictures are so well known, even the collection which was his bequest to the nation represents him in all respects so perfectly, that every reader who cares about art, and has been in London, is sure to have formed an opinion of Turner from the original documents themselves. Even in the case of American or colonial readers, the engravings from Turner's pictures in oil and water-colour give an idea of his quality as a painter sufficiently comprehensive for our purpose.

Of all his powers, the one which just now most immediately concerns us is the minute subdivision of weights of colour, as lights and darks, which made his tonality so elaborate, so much more elaborate than that of the landscape painters who preceded him. This was the technical quality which, more than any other, made his works translate themselves so well in engraving. I said in the first chapter that perfect tonality in etching is difficult and rare; there are instances of it, but these instances are not numerous. If we could suppose the position of a critic who, whilst remaining entirely ignorant of what Turner had done as an etcher, had

nevertheless made himself conversant with the works of all the notable etchers, we should not be far wrong in guessing that the critic's strongest feeling of curiosity about the etchings of Turner would be concentrated on this one point —their tonality. He would be anxious to ascertain how far this great master of tonality had overcome the difficulty of it in etching; and if with this feeling he came across a collection of Turner's plates, he would be much disappointed. Turner was a first-rate etcher *au trait*, but he did not trust himself to carry out chiaroscuro in etching, and habitually resorted to mezzotint for his light and shade. His etchings were always done from the beginning with reference to the whole arrangement of the chiaroscuro, and he never laid a line with the needle without entire understanding of its utility in effect. But the effect itself, in Turner's etchings, is always reserved for mezzotint, and it results from this habit of his, that Turner is not so good an example for etchers, or so interesting a master to study, as if he had trusted to pure etching for everything.

I had promised myself in this part of the book to avoid technical matters as far as might be possible, because it appears that when general readers come upon technical explanations they have a way of skipping them. But with reference to mezzotint and etching, and the manner of their combination, some explanation of this kind is inevitable. An etched shade, as the reader is already aware, is produced by lines which are drawn with a point on a varnished plate (the point removing the varnish where it passes), and afterwards bitten in with aquafortis; but a shade in mezzotint is *left*, and the passages in mezzotint which are perfectly white are the places where the plate has been scraped till the bur is all gone, and then polished with a burnisher. When etching and mezzotint are used in combination on the same plate, the etching is done first, and in simple lines, which are bitten in more deeply than they would be if the plate were intended to remain a pure etching; then the plate is roughened all over with a tool on purpose, and

which produces *bur*,—that is, a raising of little points of copper. These little points, which are raised by millions, all catch the ink in printing, and would yield an intense black if they were not removed. They are accordingly partially removed with the scraper when lighter darks are required, and the lighter the passage the more the bur is cleared away, till finally in high lights it is removed altogether, and the plate in these places is burnished. Now, the difference between etching with a view to mezzotint, and etching with no such intention, is very great. The etcher for mezzotint is satisfied with selecting and laying down the most necessary and expressive lines, the great guiding lines, and does not trouble himself about shading, except so far as to leave the plate in a condition to be shaded properly in mezzotint: whereas the worker in pure etching not only gives the selected and expressive guiding lines, but portions of shade along with them, and at the same time; and the more skilful he is as an etcher, the more simultaneous he is in method, giving shade and line together from the beginning, especially if he works in the acid.

The power of Turner as an etcher was his power of selecting main lines, and drawing them firmly and vigorously. In this respect no landscape etcher ever surpassed him; and if his etchings are studied as examples of line selection, they can do nothing but good, if we only bear in mind that they are preparations for mezzotint.

Another point that we cannot safely lose sight of is, that they were not intended to be printed in black, but in a rich reddish brown, so that the fear of over-biting was considerably lessened, and in the heavy foreground markings Turner did not hesitate to corrode the lines to such a depth that the paper was really embossed in the printing, and a student of art who had become blind, might recognise a particular plate by passing his fingers over the back of the impressed proof. One of the most curious instances of this is the "Jason" in the "Liber Studiorum." There is a shadow

under the tree to the left which is like the bars of a portcullis. The scales of the dragon, the heavy indications of trees, the foreground markings of vegetation, are all so bitten that the paper shows them behind in deeply sunken hollows. From these tremendous corrosions, Turner passed to light indications of distance, as, for instance, in the unpublished plate of Dumbarton, which gives one of the most delicate and charming distances ever etched. There is a small rough etching of Eton, with a man ploughing, without mezzotint, which is a good instance of Turner's tendencies in biting, and is one of the most interesting of his attempts, because it shows in exaggeration the sort of quality he aimed at in etching.

It is not fair or just to Turner to judge him as an etcher by taking proofs of plates which were obviously intended for mezzotint, and many of which have since received mezzotint, either from his own hand or that of his engraver. From a desire to economise time, or perhaps simply from imitation of Claude's "Liber Veritatis," Turner never relied upon etching to render effect, and does not seem ever to have studied it as an independent art. The kind of work he aimed at in etching was an indication of form, like the pen-work with which he would often add firmness and precision to a sepia drawing. The wash with the brush was to be imitated in mezzotint, and the difference between his combination of sepia and pen-drawing, and his combination of mezzotint and etching, was chiefly a difference in the order of procedure. When he worked on paper, the broad washes were first given, and the pen-markings added at the last; but when he worked on copper, the lines were etched first, and then the shades added by himself or another engraver. This reversal of method offered, of course, no difficulty whatever to Turner, who, having a perfect hold of his subject, could treat it in any way he liked; and what I infer from his choice of this combination is, that Turner was not really anxious to produce etchings as etchings, but merely used etching and mezzotint as the most convenient

processes for rendering his sepia studies. In this want of an etcher's ambition lies the distinction between Turner and some other great men who have etched. He made use of etching as an auxiliary, and etched well within the limits of the sort of etching he proposed to himself, but he never tried what the process was capable of. It would have been much more interesting to students of this particular art, if Turner had been thrown entirely on his own resources as an etcher, without the help of mezzotint; and it would have been especially interesting to see how far in pure etching he could have rendered the marvellous subdivisions of tonic values which we wonder at in his pictures and drawings. As a mezzotint engraver, Turner ranks exceedingly high, but his merits in that art are rather beyond our present purpose. One thing, however, cannot be outside of our province, the possibility which etching possesses of happy combination with mezzotint, and of which Turner so gladly and so successfully availed himself. It is certainly a fortunate quality in an art to be complementary of another art, so that the two together produce results of remarkable value at a minimum cost of labour. The great freedom and force of the etched line, its immense power of firm and rapid indication, are exactly the qualities in which mezzotint is most deficient; and though etching can by shading, especially if helped by dry-point work, arrive at chiaroscuro not less rich and perfect than that of the mezzotint engraver, it achieves this at an expense of toil and effort which it is not an exaggeration to estimate at three times the labour which he gives for the same result. It is very curious that, in spite of the value now attached to the prints in the "Liber Studiorum," this marriage of two arts so naturally complementary has not been more frequently repeated; but when Turner issued these plates they had little success, quantities of fine proofs from them were used to light fires, and if they have risen since then in market value, so that a complete set of them is now worth hundreds of pounds, the rise is to be attributed, *not* to any appreciation of their quality as art, but to

the fame which Turner acquired in other ways, and chiefly by popular engravings from his water-colour drawings. When an artist has once become famous, people buy his works whether they like them or not, and they end by believing that they like them; but the prints in the "Liber Studiorum" have never been really popular, and even now, when the public may still get some of them for a pound or two each, they generally prefer a showy print from Landseer or Frith. The combination of etching with mezzotint may, however, as art culture advances, become sufficiently popular to be employed in landscape illustration on a more extensive scale; and if this should ever be, the etchers of the future will have the advantage of models, in the etchings of Turner, of which it is not too much to say that on all technical points, in the application of artistic judgment to method, they are so sound and safe as to be beyond criticism.

Of his mental grasp, of his imagination, it is scarcely necessary to speak here, but a few words on the preparatory studies which led to his success as an etcher will not be out of place. He was much in the habit of drawing forms *with the point* of a sharply cut and rather hard lead pencil, and the transition from this to the etching needle was natural and easy. In his system of study he divided form from light and shade, and afterwards carried out the same division in his etchings, using the needle for form and the scraper for light and shade; but there is a subtle difference between his etchings and his point-drawings. In the point-drawings, form is often indicated with very little reference to light and shade; in the etchings the arrangement for chiaroscuro is always present in Turner's mind when he lays his lines, and he omits all lines which interfere with it, or even which are simply useless to it. This is a great secret, an open secret, yet one hidden from many artists and nearly all amateurs.

It would not be right to leave Turner without acknowledgment of the very unusual *manliness* of his manner as

an etcher, a manliness unfortunately rare in the English school. His grasp of rock and tree and mountain, his feeling of wildness on desolate moor and black tarn, his fisherman's sense of the strength of stout old boats, his understanding generally of the nature of material resistance in everything, are so masculine, that a few touches of his reveal more of the true nature of matter in any form than the most laboured work of our imitative school. A power of this kind is felt at once by minds which are themselves capable of the same masculine perception, though in far inferior degree, but it is not possible to convey by explanation in what this power consists. It is not in thickness of lines, or in depth of biting, or in manual decision, for a line may be both broad and deep and decided, and yet indicate no perception of the nature of an object: it is in his intense sense of the nature of things that such a man as Turner finds the elements of his force. And a sense of this kind does not lead to popularity, because it does not lead to prettiness. I have never met with a person not artistically educated who, without being prompted, saw anything in the etchings of Turner, still less perceived that they were the strongest things done in modern times with the etching needle. The perception of the nature of matter is very rare in the educated classes, because education is far too exclusively literary, and the most obtuse men in this respect are the men of erudition. It would be easier to explain such a power as this of Turner to a carpenter, or a stone-cutter, or a boat-builder, than to a man who knows nothing except books.

Æsacus and Hesperia.—Of all Turner's etchings this is the most remarkable for the grace and freedom of its branch-drawing. It is a piece of simple brook scenery, and materials not less graceful exist in abundance in all northern countries which are watered by running streams. Æsacus, the son of Priam, sought Hesperia in the woods; and Turner, with that love for water which characterises

all true landscape-painters, has assigned as the place of their fatal meeting one of those sweet little solitudes which from time immemorial have been dear to poets and lovers. She is seated on the gently sloping ground at the edge of a shining pool; the water has been lately divided by stones, which to the left of the etching rise visibly above its surface, but it pauses at the feet of Hesperia, where she sits, as she thinks, alone. Æsacus, still unperceived by her, has just discovered her, as he breaks through the branching fern. Over the head of the nymph bends a boldly-slanting tree, and where its boughs mingle to the left, there is a passage of such involved and wild and intricate beauty, that I can scarcely name its equal in the works of the master-etchers. Over the head of Æsacus, and between the trunks of the two principal trees, is a glade so full of tender passages of light, which are chiefly due to the work in mezzotint, that this plate may be taken as a transcendent example of Turner's power in both arts. The brilliant freedom of the etched branches, the mellow diffusion of light in the tinted glade, are both achievements of the kind which permanently class an artist.

Dumbarton (unpublished).—This plate was no doubt prepared for mezzotint, but it is in some respects an advantage for our present purpose that the mezzotint has not been added. It is scarcely probable, considering the disposition of the lines, that the effect of light and shade was intended to be a powerful one. The artistic motive of the composition was space and beauty, rather than force and contrast. The view is wide and fair, and the last waves of the granite ocean which tosses its highest crests on Cruachan and Ben Nevis come undulating here in long slopes to the edge of the lowland plain. Out of the Clyde the last expression of the exhausted mountain energy rises far off—the fortress-rock of Dumbarton. Against this beautiful distance, Turner will bring no rudely contrasting tree, but gives us the slender and

delicate acacia, with all its pendent flowers. Leading thus from the faint lines of the distance to the stronger work of the foreground, he has obtained by this transition a natural passage to the massiveness of the great trees to the left. The reader is especially entreated to allow himself to receive impartially the full and sweet amenity of this composition, for there are etchings of Turner in which his many-sided mind sought qualities very different from amenity. When the student of etching comes across a piece of work by Turner which seems to him brutal and coarse, let him remember the distant hills and the acacia in this plate of Dumbarton.

Weedy foreground. Man ploughing.—This etching is not to be confounded with the larger plate of the same subject which was afterwards engraved in mezzotint. Over the plough is a view of Eton College, and space has been left in the middle of the plough for the introduction of another figure: to the left a woman sits with a baby in her arms. The weeds in the foreground are very heavily bitten, so as to give an impression of great coarseness, but there is an etcher's intelligence even in the rude marking. This habit of over-biting was due, as I have already observed, to Turner's preparation for mezzotint, and intention of printing in warm brown instead of black. It cannot be recommended for imitation, unless under the same conditions.

Inverary Pier. Loch Fyne. Morning.—This view of Inverary shows as well as anything in the "Liber Studiorum," what sort of duty Turner intended his coarse etched lines to do. The combination of etching with mezzotint was a marriage of two opposite arts. Turner, therefore, avoided in his work with the needle every kind of labour which might intrude upon the domain of mezzotint; he even did more than this, and purposely sought in every etched line a quality the very opposite of that softness and tenderness of tint which became his chief objects when he took up the tools of the engraver. The striking contrast

between methods of work in this plate is focussed in the very centre of it. The pale mountain towards Glen Falloch is engraved with aërial delicacy, the morning shadows fall in soft gradations from the risen wreaths of mist, and against the very tenderest passage of all, the opening of the distant glen, comes the stiff mast and coarse sail of a fishing-boat, of the firmest and boldest execution. The heavily etched anchor rising out of the shallow water in the foreground sets its iron rigidity, by a similar contrast of method, against the soft and liquid surface. To the left this coarseness loses itself more gradually in greater manual refinement, and the transition from the dark boat under the pier to the far trees on the edge of the wooded hill is managed by a subtle blending of lighter and shallower bitings with rich full shades of mezzotint. The engraving here, as in the "Æsacus and Hesperia," was all done by Turner's own hand.

Jason.—When I use the word 'coarse' in speaking of the etchings of Turner, or any other master, let it not be understood in the artistic or intellectual sense, but only in the common acceptation of the word, as we say that canvas is coarse, when the threads of it are thick and the spaces large. There is as much artistic feeling in coarse canvas as in the finest web from the Indian loom, and the coarseness or fineness of a woven tissue is a quality merely relative to the keenness of human sight. The work in Turner's "Jason," which in common language may be justly called coarse, because the lines of it are thick and deep, is, in the intellectual sense, considerably more refined than the most minute work of the modern English and Germans. The combination of the highest mental refinement with some roughness of material accompaniment is as natural as that other very common combination, of perfect visible finish with low intellectual culture. The reader may remember Mr. Ruskin's vivid commentary on the imaginative force in the conception of this dragon; and it may be observed with reference especially to etching

that its merely executive qualities are always, when in perfection, dependent on imagination. The few rude strokes by which this dragon is made to live and writhe, are, considered merely as etched lines, of quality incomparably superior to the most careful imitation of scales which laborious dulness could achieve with a month's toil; and so with the wild branches of the fallen trunk on which Jason leans as he watches his enemy, and the hasty sketching of the skeleton in the corner. Of the mezzotint work I say nothing, because it is not by Turner's own hand.

Calm.—This subject is one of the most valuable in the "Liber Studiorum," as an illustration of the distinct purposes to which Turner applied etching and mezzotint. It is a group of boats on glassy sea, within a mile of shore. There is a small boat in the immediate foreground, with five figures in it and no sail; the central group is composed of hay-boats and fishing-boats, their sails hanging idly from the masts to catch the expected breeze. The cock-boat, with the figures, is etched as coarsely and vigorously as possible; the two fishing-boats in the centre are etched with moderate strength; a hay-boat beyond is just indicated with the needle, and beyond that the vessels are hardly etched at all, being made out, almost exclusively, by various delicate tints obtained by the scraper and burnisher. This is one of the most admirable examples of complete tonality in the whole range of Turner's works, but its value in this respect depends little upon the etched lines. The lines are right and true in their places, and could not be spared; they give by their force an extraordinary delicacy to the mezzotint, but almost all the tonic values are obtained in mezzotint alone. It is evident that Turner looked upon etching merely as the skeleton of his work, and relied upon mezzotint for its softer beauty and more attractive charm.

Little Devil's Bridge, over the Russ above Altdorft.—The heavy etching of the rock and pines to the left, and of

the riven tree on the isolated central rock, has the artistic advantage of harmonising with the rugged material. When the foreground is occupied by things whose nature is opposed to human effeminacy, and affords enjoyment to none but our hardiest instincts, the iron pencil may be blunt and strong, and the hand of the artist resolute; but we might not safely infer from the success of such work as this that it would be well to apply a like method to all foregrounds. A living aquafortist, of whose work I shall speak at length in its due place, has advanced the theory that all foreground work should be open and coarse, and that the lines should become finer and closer as they recede into the distance. In the case of a subject of this kind the theory is sound; but when, instead of an impression of wildness, we would convey an invitation to repose, it may be wiser to allure the spectator by surfaces which promise him ease. Mountain scenery has hitherto been very incompletely illustrated in etching. There are immense difficulties in the treatment of distant effect which have not yet been overcome either by the old masters or our contemporaries. Turner's use of mezzotint was an evasion of these difficulties, and the effect of drifting mist and broken light beyond the bridge in this design, being rendered in pure mezzotint, does not concern us. If any student, however, would copy this plate in pure etching, declining all help from mezzotint, or sulphur, or aquatint, or sandpaper, or even dry-point, he would ascertain for himself in what some of the chief difficulties of etching consist; and if he passed through the trial successfully, he might without presumption take a box of plates with him into the valleys of the Alps.

CHAPTER III.

DAVID ROBERTS.

IN a paper on *Art Criticism* published in the *Cornhill Magazine* for Sept. 1863, the present writer showed that one of the duties of a critic might be to diminish the fame of celebrated artists when it was injurious to the interests of art. It is an ungracious and a thankless office, but there are times when to refuse it would be unfaithfulness to a great trust.

The biography of David Roberts, which was published about a year ago, contained a series of etchings from Scottish baronial and monastic remains, portions of a projected work which was never completed. With reference to these plates the biographer said that they "showed Roberts as great a master in this as in other departments of art."

David Roberts was not exactly a "great master" in any department of art, but he was a very clever painter and a draughtsman of unusual readiness and ability, and won a brilliant reputation, of which it is not an exaggeration to say that, with some deductions for personal and national feeling in his admirers, it was fairly earned by much talent and very remarkable industry. As a painter, the two words which best characterise him are talent and skill; but if we pass from his paintings to his etchings, we find nothing but an entire misapprehension of the nature of etching as an inde-

pendent art. It is not that Roberts ceased to be Roberts when he took up the etching needle, but that the sort of expression which suited him was not the sort of expression which suits etching. It is as when an accomplished pianist takes up the violin; he may play well on the piano, and even play with fine expression, and yet not have the kind of expression which is necessary to a master of the bow. When these etchings of David Roberts are set up by his biographer, and by several reviewers of the biography, as the work of a "great master" in etching, it is a positive duty to declare that they are not etchings at all, in any other sense than this, that the lines are corroded with acid. Like many other more or less accomplished and successful modern painters, David Roberts really did not know in what the qualities of good etching consist; he seems to have been under the impression that it was a kind of substitute for engraving, and his plates, as I said of them in the *Saturday Review*, "are very poor attempts to imitate the prosy engravings which embellished topographical works forty years ago."

It has, no doubt, frequently happened to true etchers, in hours of comparative insensitiveness, to produce works of this stiff and prosaic character; but the true etcher is careful to destroy all such plates as these, well knowing that an etching is not to be valued by the quantity of steady labour in it, but by the amount of life and intelligence in the lines, however few. The slightest scrap by any true etcher, a bit of building by Meryon, a hand by Rembrandt, a branch by Haden, is worth, as etching, whole volumes of such painstaking topography as these plates of Roberts. It is the eternal difference between poetry and verse-making. Etching is the poetry of drawing, the essence and result of a thousand rejections and refinings; and if a man is not capable of this, his etchings should not be held up as examples, and it is an ill service to draw down upon his memory the severity of genuine criticism by exalting him as a "great master."

Setting aside all technical faults as etchings, the plates of Roberts are not even grammatical in their tonality. It is not worth while to give space in a book of this kind to the analysis of work so unprofitable as his, but if any one challenges me to produce proofs I will do so in some magazine or review.

CHAPTER IV.

WILKIE AND GEDDES.

WILKIE has left two or three etchings of first-rate quality which entitle him to a high place in the ranks of the genuine etchers. His etching of the "Pope examining a Censer," and his dry-point of a gentleman sitting at his desk writing a paper for which a man is waiting, hat in hand, are both equal to the best work of the old masters, and on these two plates alone a reputation may be securely founded. His small etching, "Reading the Will," is very inferior in manner of work, though its dramatic interest is considerable: this plate is quite in the modern English manner, which, as I shall have occasion to show later, is a departure from the true principles of the art. A felicitous combination of etching and dry-point may be found in the third state of a small plate by Wilkie, called in the British Museum "Boys and Dogs." The subject is two boys, a girl, and a dog; the boys are making a seat with their hands for the girl, who is not yet seated, but superintends the arrangement. This etching is remarkable for the extreme naturalness and ease of the attitudes, whilst the community of purpose unites the little group very perfectly. In the first state there is no dry-point work.

The characteristics of Wilkie's best plates are good composition and happy selection of line. His perception of character was, no doubt, a very great and rare quality; but

this will not save an etching from condemnation if, as etching, the workmanship is commonplace or wrong. For instance, if Wilkie had never done anything better than the "Reading of the Will," I should not have classed him amongst great etchers. The dramatic conception is lively and good, but the workmanship is uninteresting and commonplace.

Andrew Geddes was a good etcher, hitherto not sufficiently appreciated. His dry-points are especially fine; the one of a little girl holding a pear is charming for its freedom and grace. There is a portrait by him with the odd title "Give the Devil his Due," very luminous and well modelled; and another portrait of a lady in a hood, of which the reader is recommended to study an early impression of the fourth state. The hood is exceedingly fine in dry-point work. His "Head of Martin, an auctioneer at Edinburgh," is very clever and characteristic: I only know one state of it. His landscape without title (a clump of trees and wooden building under it) is free, and right in workmanship. In the first state there is no signature, and the sky is dirtied with sandpaper. In the second state the sky is cleared, but light indications of cloud are introduced: there is still no signature. In the third and fourth states there is a signature in the right-hand corner, and a sulphur tint is introduced for cloud. Of these states the second is technically the best, and may be taken as a fair example of dry-point. This landscape and "The little Girl with the Pear," like the "Pope and Censer" and "Gentleman at his Desk" of Wilkie, are enough of themselves to entitle the author to honourable mention.

WILKIE. *The Pope examining a Censer.*—As this is one of the finest etchings ever produced in England, it may be worth while to inquire what are the sources of its power. The draughtsmanship is of that happy kind which, fully possessing precision, allows itself perfect freedom. There

is a close analogy between freedom of this kind and the freedom of the most beautiful manners. Clowns have freedom amongst themselves, but they have not manners; semi-gentlemen have manners without freedom, because they think about rules, and force themselves into a disciplined conformity; but in the perfect gentleman the time of discipline is passed, and his manners are as free as if he had never submitted to it. The work in this etching is so easy, and at the same time, where necessary, so accurate and precise, that if it were the only production of its author we should infer from it the long labours of his youth. The firm drawing of the Pope's face and the fingers of the left hand, the true and graceful festooning of the rapid lines which indicate the censer-chains, contain the two extremes of freedom and precision in method, between which the greatest etchers range at will. The Pontiff has a royal naturalness of attitude, and quietly examines the work of the goldsmith, who presents it humbly on his knees.

The Seat of Hands.—This plate has no title, but is marked in the British Museum, "Boys and Dogs." Two boys are making a seat by grasping each other's arms, and a girl, who is going to sit down upon it, is criticising the arrangement. A dog precedes the party. It is a graceful little subject, like those which were often adopted by the best portrait painters of the last century in family groups. The execution is very spirited and light. The rich dry-point work in the third state has much improved the plate. The opportunity is a good one for marking the difference between curiosity-collecting and the love of art. I know not whether the first state of this plate is rare or common, but I know that if the first state is rare, and the third common, all genuine collectors for curiosity will pay ten times as much for the incomplete as they would for the finished work. It is only artistic criticism which sets the highest value on the latest states. Of course the plate must not be worn, but a real judge knows a good proof when he sees it without any mark of rarity to guide him.

Gentleman at his Desk.—A gentleman is seated large arm-chair, and is writing a receipt at his desk man is waiting for the paper, and stands behind the chair. The gentleman's wife is looking on whilst he writes. There is a dog, which is scratching itself, and there are several small details, such as a boot-jack, sticks, &c. Next to the masterly indication of character in the faces and attitudes, this plate is remarkable for its sound quality of dry-point work. If the reader is a practical etcher, he ought to study the rich effect of the background, the darks under the bureau, and near the gentleman's feet, and the slight yet sufficient indications of detail.

Reading the Will.—A lawyer, who is seated on an old-fashioned chair with his back to the light and a large table before him, is reading a will to expectant heirs. The study of expression is of the kind which made Wilkie popular, and need not be expatiated upon in this place. Wilkie seems to have hesitated between two directions as an aqua-fortist. The execution here is of the sort common in England, the execution of the "Pope and Censer" of a sort unfortunately not so common. If etching were limited to work of this kind, it would be truly no better than a somewhat easier substitute for engraving; having indeed the advantage of being executed by the artist's own hand, but beyond this no special quality or power. The steady equality of workmanship, the patience to bring all things to an equal point of finish, may prove sanity of mind and freedom from all morbid irritability of nerve, but it proves also some dulness of perception by its very impartiality, and a state of mind which differs from the high artistic spirit by its perceptible tendency towards Philistinism. For Philistinism penetrates even into the very realm of art itself, and may be always known, even in its feeblest manifestation, by a sort of prosy conscientiousness.

GEDDES. *Little Girl holding a Pear.*—She is seated on the ground, and wears a white dress; her head is relieved

against a dark tree; she holds out a pear in her left hand. The dress is very slightly indicated. The whole work is in dry-point. It is so natural and graceful that it reminds us of the portraits of children in the best age of English portraiture.

Landscape.—In cases where there is no title, which too frequently happens with etchings, it becomes necessary to give some brief description by which the plate alluded to may be recognised. In this we have a clump of trees and a wooden building. In the foreground to the left there is a low arch in the earth, built of stone. In the later states there is a dark cloud behind the building. With the exception of the cloud the plate is executed in dry-point. The subject is simple, and Geddes was not a master of landscape, but his manner of treatment suited the means used, and it may easily happen that accomplished landscape painters, by attempting more, arrive at less satisfactory results.

CHAPTER V.

RUSKIN.

MR. RUSKIN is so famous as a writer, that his critics have scarcely done him full justice as an artist. It is easy to imply depreciation by the word "amateur," which has been freely used in reference to him, and which is generally resorted to in cases where an artist does not earn his living with pencil or brush. We shall have more to say on this subject with reference to Mr. Seymour Haden, another artist who happens to be an amateur; for the present it is enough to observe, that although in many respects Mr. Ruskin's etchings are not to be considered examples of what is best in etching, still he is an artist in the same sense as any professional member of the pre-Raphaelite or topographic school—as much an artist as Brett, or even, in his own line of subject, as Holman Hunt, or Jules Jacquemart, or Blaise Desgoffe. The great synthetic artists, as Turner and Troyon, belong of course to a higher order; but if the title is to be allowed, as it generally is, to skilful imitators, Ruskin has as fair a claim to it as any of his contemporaries.

The disposition to deny capacity in two different occupations is so strong, that a good writer has always a peculiar difficulty in obtaining recognition as a painter or draughtsman. This prejudice is especially strong amongst professional painters, who are seldom willing to allow that Ruskin is more than "a mere theorist." No doubt a theorist is the most qualified person to write theoretical

works: and although, when a painter says that a writer on art is a "theorist," he intends to imply that his writings are of no use; still, no one who recognises the value of theory, as Leonardo da Vinci did, will be disposed to refuse honour to theorists, even when they are nothing else, if only they are good ones. The separation of theory from practice has been erected into a dogma by the positive philosophy; and it is probable that if M. Littré and M. de Blignières were asked whether a critic might also be an artist, they would at once settle the question negatively, in obedience to one of the fundamental principles of their philosophy,—the separation of the spiritual and temporal powers, of thought and action, of theory and practice. But whatever may be true of some other kinds of art, the graphic arts offer insuperable difficulties to the criticism of wholly unpractical persons. The first conditions of criticism are sight and knowledge, and every reader who is able to draw will agree with me that sight and knowledge in the artistic sense can only be acquired by practical study, or in the intervals of practical study. I should not go so far as to say that knowledge of this kind can only be acquired pencil in hand, because, when an artist takes a drive or a sea-voyage, or shoots on Scottish moors, or fishes by beautiful streams, he is constantly learning and observing; but he could not under such circumstances observe with profit unless he had learned the art of observation by the practical effort to render what he saw. The observation of lovers of nature who have not attempted to draw, is often very delightful to themselves, and may lead them to a better appreciation of landscape in literature, but it is of slight use in the criticism of pictures; and so closely is the power of art-criticism connected with practical knowledge, that it may always be presumed, when an author criticises art intelligently, that he is himself, if not an accomplished artist, at least a practical student. Whatever may be Mr. Ruskin's faults or shortcomings as

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a critic, he has proved his knowledge of certain things, chiefly mountains and architecture, in a degree which necessarily implies sufficient skill with the pencil to make good studies; yet the tendency amongst artists to class him as an entirely unpractical theorist is so strong, that some of them actually will not believe that he has executed the work which bears his name. An instance of this came one day under my own observation, and is mentioned here because the case is a typical one. I was looking through the portfolios of an eminent painter who is usually very severe in his criticism of Mr. Ruskin, and finding one of the best soft-ground etchings in the "Seven Lamps of Architecture," I thought the opportunity a good one for bringing my friend to admit some artistic capability in the etcher. To my great surprise, he entirely agreed in all I had to say in favour of the plate; but when I came to the conclusion, and congratulated my friend on having overcome his prejudices against the author of the "Seven Lamps," he answered me with the following syllogism: "A man ignorant of art cannot produce a good etching. Ruskin is ignorant of art, therefore Ruskin has not produced this etching."

The fact that the plate was signed *J. R. del. et sc.* made no difference, and of course the more I showed the command of means of which the plate gave evidence, the less would my friend believe it to be Mr. Ruskin's work. Every good quality in the work of art was considered, *not* as evidence that Mr. Ruskin was an artist, but that, being an amateur, he could not have done it. An instance exactly parallel occurred in the case of Mr. Seymour Haden. When Mr. Haden's etchings appeared, an eminent artist wrote a letter to one of his friends in which he positively asserted that Mr. Haden had not etched the plates which he had published, but had purchased the talent of a poor artist of genius, binding the genius never to reveal his name. I have seen this letter, and read it from beginning to end; the name of the writer is famous,

and if I gave it in this place it would not be new to a single reader. The reasoning in this last case was exactly the same as in the case of Mr. Ruskin; the works of Mr. Haden were admitted to be excellent, but their very excellence was itself held to be evidence against their authenticity, because it was not to be supposed that an amateur could do work of that quality. This is the kind and degree of prejudice against which artists who do not earn their living by art have to contend. The bare fact that they are capable of doing something else is considered to prove their incapacity to produce a work of art; and when the excellence of the work of art is so splendid that it cannot be denied, it is admitted only that the credit of it may be refused to its author, who, in addition to being slighted for incapacity, is accused of downright dishonesty. The instances I have just given are of course exceptional and extreme, but the feeling which prompted the accusation of dishonesty in these cases is in minor degrees a very common one; and when an amateur does good work, either the merit of it is admitted with the qualification that it is good "for an amateur," or else it is attributed to the help of some friendly artist, or the imitation of some model. The position of amateurs is, in its outward relation, an unsatisfactory one; their friends pay them compliments which, if the amateur knows the value of his own work, are usually more embarrassing than the most severe criticism, and the outer world slights their work as unworthy of serious examination. In this book, and everywhere else, I shall treat amateurs exactly as professional artists; their money matters do not concern me, but only the quality of their work. The unsoundness of the popular distinction between amateurs and artists lies in its being only a money distinction, which does not refer either to capacity or training. The definition that an amateur is a person who has not been educated for art, does not draw the line which the popular feeling requires, because half our professional artists are unedu-

cated in art. The distinction which is really recognised is that between an artist who gets his living by art and one who does not.

Setting aside, therefore, this question of amateurship, and considering Mr. Ruskin's work simply as I should that of any other student, I recognise in it, first, on the favourable side, that knowledge of the nature of objects which is the foundation of art. Mr. Ruskin has not drawn anything without having ascertained for himself the laws of its existence; if he draws an arch or a capital, it is either doing duty now or has been capable of service in time past, and as much as possible of its history is conveyed to us, by the rounding wear of rain, by frost-splitting, by slow crumbling in sun and wind, by stains of creeping vegetation, or nestlings of bolder plants. This is due to a certain tenderness or pensiveness in his mind, which, although not a mark of intellectual strength, is a delightful quality in an artist. The strongest intellects have no especial reverence for antiquity, and past history overawes them no more than the history we read in the newspapers; they read it with interest mainly on account of the light it throws on human nature, but do not reverence the antiquity of the record. Now, the loving and patient care with which Mr. Ruskin follows the effects of time upon a building is due to a feeling which the strongest minds cast from them as a tender superstition. He *does* reverence the antiquity of the record, and every trace of the slow centuries is valued by him with a feeling infinitely more delicate and poetical than any antiquarianism. The past is not to him profane and inconsistent like the present, nor can he approach it in the same temper, for the present is a time for biting sarcasm and bitter condemnation; but the Middle Ages were the ages of faith and light, when duty was the predominant thought and Christ the hope of the world. Every remnant of the noble architecture of that time is therefore to Ruskin the most precious of human communications; he reads it as a

sacred writing, whose lost syllables can never be restored. We should know all this from his drawings and etchings if he had never written a page about architecture.

The best etchings Ruskin has done are the illustrations to the "Seven Lamps." They were hurried in execution, and in later editions have been replaced by engravings; but the rude etchings were very delightful with all their shortcomings, for they were frank and affectionate, and had the inexpressible charm of sincere and genuine feeling. No architectural draughtsman whom I can name, with the one glorious exception of Méryon, has ever drawn buildings in a way comparable to this. David Roberts admired them, and drew them boldly and brilliantly with extraordinary sureness of method, but he had not this loving fidelity; Carl Werner is a wonderful imitator, and James Holland is a facile and artistic interpreter, but they have not this passionate earnestness, nor these meltings of love so tender that it is almost morbid. It is said that artists are sometimes so affected by what they do that they see the things they love through tears; the poet weeps as he writes alone in his quiet room, and tears fall on the keys of the piano when the great composer dreams out a mournful requiem. So there are bits of old buildings in Ruskin's memoranda which seem to have been drawn in a spirit as sad and regretful as theirs; and if not drawn with dimmed eyes, the tears seem to have been restrained only lest they should hinder the clearness of vision. What this artist was drawing to-day the destroyers cast down on the morrow, and he worked with a sorrowful heart, the sound of their hammers in his ears.

"The Seven Lamps of Architecture" is a book sufficiently well known to mention particular plates, and a few of these are criticised in detail in the catalogue of etchings to be studied. Considered technically as soft-ground etchings, they have great qualities, but much uncertainty of execution; the biting is not always successful, and, as the author warned us in his preface, there are

marks of haste. But in spite of these drawbacks I remember no soft-ground etchings which better exemplify the qualities of the art; one or two of Cotman's are good in a different way, but no others that I have seen deserve comparison with them for accent and vivacity.

As an etcher with the point, Mr. Ruskin has much delicacy of hand, but his habit of minute accuracy is against him, because it gives his work a rather meagre and precise appearance. His observation of certain orders of fact is reliable and just, but he seems to lack the faculty of retaining great general impressions, and, though probably capable of deep emotion, seldom communicates it artistically to the spectator. The habit of studying objects critically and scientifically has led Mr. Ruskin to a kind of etching whose worst fault is its want of *abandon.* The topographical school to which, as an artist, Mr. Ruskin has always belonged, is unfavourable to etching, because of the severity of its self-restraint. For the same moral and intellectual reasons a very different school of art, the classical, is equally unfavourable to etching. I am not aware that Mr. Ruskin has produced anything in point etching which shows any especial sympathy with the art; his plates are little more than copies of pen-drawings, and not etchings in the true sense. They are better than the plates of David Roberts, and show great knowledge of mountain form, but they are not, and we may presume were never intended to be, examples of etching as an art. It may be observed in passing, that throughout Mr. Ruskin's writings there does not occur a single chapter, or even page, devoted to the subject of etching, and I do not remember so much as a paragraph in which its powers are insisted upon, or the public indifference to it reproved. When a subject happens to have been etched on copper by some artist who engages Mr. Ruskin's attention, he speaks of it as he would of a drawing or a picture, but never seems to be especially interested by

the qualities of etching as a peculiar and independent art. This absence of the etcher's especial enthusiasm accounts for the absence of the especial qualities of the etcher. We have the qualities of a patient and accurate designer, but not the subtle freshness, the happy waywardness, the speed and vivacity of the noble aquafortists. Yet one thing has been once again proved by the kind of success which Mr. Ruskin has achieved; it is evident that etching is capable of expressing the most precise knowledge, and that the emptiness of idle and ignorant performance is by no means to be attributed to any inherent difficulty in the art. If, in the future, some great etcher should arise, with a knowledge of mountain scenery equal to Mr. Ruskin's, but with more freedom and imagination, and a closer sympathy with the best tendencies of etching, the results will be both satisfactory and delightful. Mountains have never been etched yet as they deserve to be: Claude could etch most admirably, but was ignorant of mountain anatomy; Turner could etch, and knew mountains, but his etchings are mixed with mezzotint; Calame etched laboriously, and knew the Alps, but could not select and abridge; and Ruskin knows the Alps as well as any of these, and has plenty of skill as a draughtsman, but not the sacred fire.

Capital from the lower arcade of the Doge's Palace, Venice.—When the "Seven Lamps of Architecture" was published, eighteen years ago, I knew little about any fine art, and less perhaps of etching than of any other which came habitually in my way; but this capital from the Doge's palace, from its magnificent depth of shadow and the imaginative grandeur of its foliage and birds, always had a singular attraction for me, and increased my enjoyment of Gothic capitals generally. It is rather a note of shadows than a study of forms, but the forms themselves owe half their grandeur to the shadows they cast. The loss of detail in the shadows is not entirely defensible, because

there are always reflections strong enough to show more detail than is visible here; but the hints and suggestions in this etching have a stronger effect upon the imagination than work more completely made out, and it is to be accounted a merit that whatever else is lost the artistic aspect is always preserved, or at least its preservation has been the etcher's principal aim. The first springing of the massive mouldings above the capital suggests the weight of the entire arch; and though the system of light and shade resembles too closely that of photography, there is a life in the marking of the wild foliage and quaint long-beaked storks which photography would not have given, for it is not wholly attributable to him who carved the stone: the stone-cutter left, no doubt, the lines of that cornice more simply mechanical than we see them here, and for the picturesque charm of its now broken and various surface we have to thank the artistic feeling of the etcher. A classical designer neither could nor would draw architecture in this way, because if a line had been straight at first he would restore its straightness and draw it rigidly with a ruler, ignoring accident and decay. Ruskin's opposition to the classical spirit has been rather artistic than philosophical; but a man who aspires to be an etcher can scarcely hate classicism too ardently, and a single piece of cornice drawn mechanically, like the Roman Gate of Autun in the "Saint Symphorien" of Ingres, would go further to ruin an etching than any of the technical imperfections in this.

Part of the Cathedral of Saint Lo, Normandy.—An arch with small statues under canopies, above it a light gable filled with tracery and decorated with crockets, terminating in a finial. Behind this gable is a light gallery of tracery, at the angles of which are pinnacles. There are several defective and weak parts in this etching, but it is delightful for a pathetic fidelity. Observe how every fragment of the beautiful broken foliage between the crockets is noticed and recorded, and how entirely free is the etcher from any

temptation to restore the fragments which are lost. When a stone is so far decayed that the sharp lines of its sculpture are all gone, the mysterious hints of form which still remain in it are studied with unabated interest. The difference between this loving and reverential spirit and the feeling which prompts French municipalities to pull down such work as this because it is out of repair, marks the antagonism between artistic and *bourgeoises* ideas. On one side we have the love for nobleness and a pathetic interest in the broken remnants of a glorious art; on the other a total indifference to artistic grandeur and a mean intolerance of the marks of time. One of the characteristics of modern Philistinism, both in England and France, is its love of neatness and newness, and its incapacity to see what is venerable in buildings or in men.

Window from the Ca' Foscari, Venice.—When artists draw architecture well, they have always a strong constructive instinct, a sense of the weight and strength of the materials, and a knowledge of the uses to which they are put. The great massiveness and solidity of the simple Venetian tracery was never rendered in a way at once so powerful in effect and so explanatory of construction. We see how the heavy stones were hewn and placed, and we know why the dark glass was set so far behind the sharp, plain cusps. The first merit of an aquafortist is the power of explaining structure. The following quotation from a criticism of mine on the work of a bad French etcher may, by contrast, add force to my praise of Ruskin:—"The artist has *no perception of architectural construction*—actually sees no more the strength of stone and marble than if they were pasteboard. To learn what stones are, he ought to work as a mason for seven years. By chiselling mouldings and brackets of their actual size, he would learn something of their shape and weight."

Arch from the façade of the Church of San Michele at Lucca.—Not entirely successful in the biting, one or two cast shadows being exactly of the same weight with the

shaded side of the projections which cast them; and yet, in spite of this, and the excessive sacrifice of detail in shade, an etching of more than usual interest, not only for the quaint richness of its material, but for the bold preservation of local colour in full light. The richness of the soft-ground process and its suitableness for architectural illustration have seldom been more completely exhibited, but after the removal of the varnish the plate has been reinforced with the point, whose assistance is seldom altogether unneeded. There are grammatical faults in the tonality, as, for instance, in the shadow on the white and dark marble of the arch, which is of precisely the same force on both; but there are valuable gradations in the sculptured mouldings, and much interesting variety of line. The light on the wall behind the arcade, between the columns under the shadow of the arch, is the best bit of illumination in the whole plate.

Loire side.—An etching on the usual hard ground, done with the point. It is copied from a water-colour by Turner, but the copy is free and intelligent, and, being a sketch done to illustrate composition, is more than a simple transcript. The main thing illustrated, the composition, is of course the painter's, but the etcher deserves praise for the simplicity of his method, and especially for the success of his interpretation of the distance.

Pass of Faido (*simple topography*).—This is a kind of work which, if persisted in, would deprive an artist of all chance of distinguishing himself as an etcher, and it is the more necessary to warn students against it, that it has the appearance of an unusual conscientiousness in study; but the object of the study here is geology, not art, and though the mountain forms are carefully outlined, the soul of the landscape is absent. Our etchers must resist the topographic tendency as rigorously as their other great enemy, classicism. All work is bad for them which abandons synthesis for any abstraction of an analytic kind, and especially which restrains liberty, and hinders the

full expression of feeling. Now, although topography is never entirely devoid of human accent, it injures artistic expression by taking for its first object the visible and measurable fact. The perfection of topography is accuracy, but the perfection of etching is of a kind incompatible with accuracy, for its best qualities and its peculiar claims to high rank amongst the arts are all personal and emotional. Every accentuation, however slight, every personal preference or feeling, is a sin against the iron rule of accuracy, and true etchers must ever remember that the glory of their art is neither in the recording of natural phenomena nor the portraiture of material forms, but in the free expression of the artistic ideas which fire their own souls.

CHAPTER VI.

WHISTLER.

JAMES WHISTLER is of American extraction. He studied painting in France, in the studio of [illegible]. As a student he was capricious and irregular, and did not leave the impression amongst his fellow-pupils that his future would be in any way distinguished. He never entirely submitted to the French academical discipline, and his artistic education, like that of many English artists, seems to have been mainly acquired by private and independent study.

As an artist who by this time has fully expressed at least his tendencies, Whistler may be fairly estimated now. He has very rare and very peculiar endowments, and may in a certain sense be called great,—that is, so far as greatness may be understood of faculties which are rather remarkable for keenness and originality than range. The faculties which he has are pre-eminently of the artistic order; he is essentially a painter and etcher, not a dramatist or poet; he is never literary, but always pictorial. And in his pictures and etchings it is the most artistic points that interest him most—not so much the natural material as what may be done with it. His oil-pictures are experiments in colour-harmonies, and his etchings are notes of strange concurrences of line. Whether he really loves anything I have never been able to determine, but he has a predilection for the wharves of the Thames, which, in a warmer temperament, would have grown into a strong

affection. Whistler seems from his works—I do not know him personally—to be not altogether expansive or sympathetic, but self-concentrated and repellent of the softer emotions. His work is often admirable, but it is rarely affecting, because we can so seldom believe that the artist has himself been affected. It is very observant, very penetrating, very sensitive even, in a peculiar way, but not poetically sensitive. Though educated as a figure-painter, Whistler has given no proof of his interest, either in the events of history or of the common life around him; and a figure, for him, is useful chiefly because it can wear clothes of any colour he pleases. The only people for whom he seems to have a sort of liking are the Thames bargemen, and he has sketched them not unfaithfully, with appropriate costume and short pipes. It would be unfair, perhaps, to say that Whistler has no sense of beauty, for he has evidently an instinct for beautiful arrangements of colour, but it is not unfair to say that beauty of form is not his object. Indifference to beauty is, however, compatible with splendid success in etching, as the career of Rembrandt proved. What an etcher needs is not so much a sense of beauty as of expression and variety; and if a choice had to be made between the man who enjoyed beauty, but enjoyed nothing else, and the man who, without any especial appreciation of the beautiful, read in everything the marks which tell the story of its existence, we may rely upon it that the better etcher of the two would not be the slave of beauty.

Whistler is a master of line, but not of chiaroscuro. There is seldom in his etchings any large arrangement of light and shade, and the resources of art in tonic values are often prematurely exhausted, so that to complete the picture we should need some pigment a great deal blacker than printer's ink. The lighting of his subjects is usually very much scattered, but this is in harmony with their medley of material, and there is no reason why an effect of breaking and scattering may not occasionally be selected

as a motive. Art is so large, that it may express not only unity and repose, but restlessness and confusion. In many of Whistler's etchings the eye has no peace, and cannot find a space of tranquil light or quiet shade; but after long familiarity with the art that illustrates unity and repose, we find refreshment in this very carelessness of unity, and even, if such a paradox may be pardoned, a unity in their scattering and an aim in their aimlessness.

It is not of much use to refer to particular etchings by Whistler, because though copies of some of them have been exhibited at the Royal Academy, at the French Universal Exhibition, and elsewhere, the whole series has not been published, and is not now easily accessible. The British Museum possesses a few plates, five or six, of which three are described below; but Mr. Whistler seems to be aware that etchings are usually sought as much for their rarity as their excellence, and to have determined that his own plates shall be rare already. I have been told that, if application is made by letter to Mr. Whistler for a set of his etchings, he may perhaps, if he chooses to answer the letter, do the applicant the favour to let him have a copy for about the price of a good horse; but beyond such exceptional instances as this, Mr. Whistler's etchings are not in the market. First, the public would not buy, and then the artist would not sell, so that there has been little commerce between them. Whether Mr. Whistler has any intention of publishing, I cannot inform the reader: but if ever he should, let me especially recommend the Hungerford Bridge (for exquisite delicacy of curve); the little girl leaning against a door-post in France, a woman inside the house cooking; a boy seated, and holding his foot (dry-point), hat on the floor, dress of black velvet; and the three subjects which follow.

Wapping Wharf.—The reader may know this etching by the following indications. There is a house with bow-windows to the right, and three common windows above.

Over these is a sign with the words, "Thames Police;" a second house bears the inscription, "Wapping Wharf." The shores of the Thames in London used to be picturesque, and the new embankment will remove much material that is interesting to artists; but the picturesque of the London river is after all nothing but a more entertaining variety of the universal London ugliness. The Thames is beautiful from Maidenhead to Kew, but not from Battersea to Sheerness. If beauty were the only province of art, neither painters nor etchers would find anything to occupy them in the foul stream that washes the London wharves; but even ugliness itself may be valuable if only it has sufficient human interest and fortuitous variety of lines. The long brick streets whose regularity charms the least artistic section of the public, are as ugly as Wapping Wharf, but they are not so available for etching, because they have nothing accidental and unforeseen. A subject like this is not only picturesque, but very quaint and curious, full of all sorts of odd bits of detail that come together in a strange way that amuses and occupies the spectator. It takes some time to analyse any of Whistler's more complicated river subjects, and we have a pleasure in the occupation, which is much enhanced by the singular skill of the designer. In this particular etching attention may be directed to the delicacy of work on the principal roof, and to the rapid but subtle sketching of the barges and wherry in the foreground.

Black Lion Wharf.—I take this as a representative example of Whistler's peculiar qualities and faults; the faults being, as so often happens in art, inseparable from the qualities, and not so much to be condemned as simply stated, to prevent them from having an influence which might become widely and permanently injurious. It is one of the Thames wharves seen across the water; in the foreground we have a man sitting in a barge, his arm resting on the gunwale. Near the shore is a schooner, a barge full of barrels, one or two other boats, a landing-

stage, a crane, several houses, and two large warehouses, one with a long chimney. The roofs, as usual, are studied with the utmost minuteness, and no detail of window or balcony is missed. The schooner is very finely indicated, but the foreground is slight in the extreme, and is altogether out of relation to the rest of the subject. The artist has exhausted all his darks in the details of the shore: the blacks in a single bow-window beyond the schooner have got down already to the very bottom of the scale; and as nothing in an etching can be made blacker than pure printer's ink, the artist has no resource left for his foreground, and so sketches it without attempting any statement of its relation to that bow-window. But if we concentrate our attention, as Whistler did, upon the buildings, our study will be amply rewarded. Though the work is very careful, it is by no means slavish, and differs from the careful work of bad etchers more by keenness of observation and vivacity of handling, than by any disdain for small facts. If there is composition, it is so consummate as to be undiscoverable; but the very absence of it increases the appearance of jumble which is so characteristic of the London wharves. Houses built without a plan, and figures who do not trouble themselves about the rules of art, are the materials that Whistler has sought: disorder and confusion are the law of their visible existence, and not confusion of the sort which in art is the most orderly arrangement; and as the absence of composition only helps the expression of character, so the sins against tonality give a striking look of truth. The whole attention of the spectator is concentrated on the wharf; and if the houses there are considered without reference to any nearer object, their tonality approaches more closely to the strong oppositions of nature than any delicate Turnerian interpretation.

Boats at a mooring—Evening.—Seven boats with masts are fastened by ropes to a ring in a post on the right. There is a large barge to the left, with five men on it.

Behind the boats is a bridge and a church tower; on the shore, to the left, above the barge, there is a brick building with stone facings, and a clock in a tower. The shore is crowded with people, and there are figures ascending stairs.

Whistler's etchings are not generally remarkable for poetical feeling, but there is a harmony in the thin lines of these masts and in the festoons of the converging cables that hold the boats, which approaches poetical synthesis. The variety of inclination in the masts is very subtle and beautiful; a fan-like arrangement, artfully broken in the middle by one contradictory vessel. The fine strokes for cordage are drawn with great certainty against the tender evening sky. There is some mysterious work in the bridge, and strong realism in the near brick building to the left.

CHAPTER VII.

HADEN.

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN is a London surgeon in large practice, devoted to his profession, which he pursues actively.

Francis Seymour Haden is an artist of rare endowment and consummate practical skill.

These two statements may seem incompatible, but they are both true. When a surgeon or other professional gentleman outside of art reads this, he will wonder how it can be possible that a practical surgeon can be also a practical artist; he may even go a step farther, and decide in his own mind that it is not possible. However, whether possible or not, it is a fact. So, when an artist who has not seen Haden's etchings hears that he is a doctor and an amateur, he may feel certain that the etchings cannot be worth much; but then the undeniable fact is that they *are* worth much, that they are worth more than professional work generally, and that it is difficult to find work of the same technical quality amongst the productions of contemporary artists, either in England or out of England.

This success of Mr. Haden as an artist—a success which is not due to any temporary fashion, but will be as permanent as any other modern reputation of equal present importance—is the most interesting fact which can be adduced in reference to the great question of amateurship, and it is worth while to consider how far Mr. Haden's position resembles that of other amateurs generally, and

what degree of hope of a like success they may reasonably entertain.

It is true that etching has been Mr. Haden's recreation, and not the great business of his life; but drawing, which is the foundation of etching, was employed by him as an auxiliary in the study of anatomy, and men of great power often carry a spirit of resolution into their amusements, and a determination to do what they undertake as well as they possibly can, even when they have no intention of earning money by it. The kind of recreation which Mr. Haden has sought in art was not pastime, but diversion—not a way of passing time agreeably, so much as something to divert great energies from their usual channel. He would never have been an etcher at all, if he had always regularly enjoyed the perfect health necessary to uninterrupted professional work; but though his constitution is robust, there was a time, some years ago, when its powers were so much overtaxed that a very long rest was considered necessary, and during this time of rest Mr. Haden produced the etchings that we know. Since then his health has been re-established, the practice of medicine resumed, and etching entirely abandoned. The production of an etching is too serious and difficult a matter to be undertaken when the mind is pre-occupied by other interests; and though it may require only three hours to etch a plate, these hours must be preceded by other hours of uninterrupted tranquillity, and there must be no anxiety about work to be done, or appointments to be kept, just when the plate is finished. An active surgeon or lawyer, however true might be his natural gift as an artist, however consummate his acquired facility, could not, in short intervals stolen from his profession, get himself sufficiently into the artistic frame of mind for the production of good work. The reader would therefore greatly mistake the conditions under which Mr. Haden's etchings were achieved, if he supposed that the artist executed his plates during the intervals of consultations. Though a surgeon by profession, he had been

compelled against his will to abandon medicine temporarily, and sought occupation in etching; living, for the time, the life of an artist, and purposely detaching his mind as much as possible from professional cares and thoughts. That Mr. Haden has by nature a very powerful and original artistic faculty I have no doubt, but it is not so certain that he is naturally more artist than surgeon, or that we ought to regret the devotion of his life to a career outside of art. There are instances of men who are in professions which they dislike, and who seek in music or painting, often also in the more attractive kinds of literary work, a relief from the tedium of uncongenial duties. But the case of Mr. Haden is so far from being one of these, that he is devotedly attached to his profession, and quitted it for art only that he might return to it later with re-invigorated energies. He had long possessed a rich collection of etchings, and the example of Whistler induced him to make a practical attempt. The result was so far satisfactory as to be an encouragement to perseverance, and Mr. Haden found in etching the patience to endure a temporary pause in the career of his serious ambition. Whilst etching the plates which have won for him artistic fame, Mr. Haden had no idea of showing his work to the public; he did it for his own health and delight, and neither for our pleasure nor our praise.

This last fact brings me to a consideration which is favourable to the chances of amateurs. Artists who work for money and reputation are obliged to consult the market, to think whether their work is likely to suit the taste which, for the time being, is prevalent; and this often leads them to much embarrassment and hesitation, and cramps their true genius. They are like speakers on a platform: they have to adapt themselves to an audience, and their success seems to depend as much upon their knowledge of the public as upon their knowledge of art. In saying this, I am not speaking vaguely, but have living instances before me; instances of men who, being compelled to go

out of their true path in order to earn their bread, become anxious rather to please the public than to satisfy themselves, and waste time and thought in the endeavour to adapt their work to the general demand. I know these things from the inside, and have seen the effects of this anxiety, the loss of force and directness to which it leads, the loss of originality, the extinction of enthusiasm, the sacrifice of truth. But the artist who neither works for income nor reputation need not suffer from this distracting cause. He goes directly to his aim, which is the perfect expression of his thought. His art is not a speech from a platform, but a sincere soliloquy in the presence of nature and of God.

A case like Mr. Haden's is so exceptional that the reader may have a difficulty in believing that he worked without intending to publish. The idea of publication only suggested itself when it had become evident, that amongst the plates already executed there was material for an interesting portfolio. An intelligent French critic, M. Burty, saw their value, and catalogued them, and the publication was accompanied by M. Burty's Catalogue. They were published in Paris, and shortly afterwards, in London, by Messrs. Colnaghi. No issue of etchings ever had such rapid and complete success. The reviews of them were very numerous; all the London papers noticed them, and every review was in a strain of almost unmixed eulogy. The subscription list was rapidly filled, though the price went beyond even English custom, and in a few weeks one of the busiest surgeons in London found himself one of its most celebrated artists.

A success of this kind is not likely to be repeated, but it has done good service to the art, by awakening an interest in it; and we who by warm praise made Mr. Haden's etchings famous, will never have to repent our share in the work. Whatever mistakes we have made, posterity will not say that this is one of them.

How the skill came to him is still, after all explanations,

a mystery. No one ever before was able to do work of equal quality after so little manual practice. The anatomical drawing laid a foundation, and perhaps the manual precision necessary in dissection, and still more in operations on the living subject, may have developed a natural capacity to apprehend form: but what is so curious is that the etchings show no trace of a *dominant* sense of mere construction; that the scientific element is entirely subordinated to the artistic impression, and this to such a degree that there is no obtrusive display of structural knowledge, even where it was fully possessed, and the figures hold their places as true landscape-figures, such as any other anatomist would have become pedantic about muscles and bones. The structure of trees is always powerfully rendered, and, whether in foliage or branch or stem, the draughtsmanship is equal to that of any contemporary landscape-painter; but even here there is no pedantry of science or system, and the trees are drawn quite freely and innocently, as if the artist knew them only by the intense gaze of a simple lover of nature. This entire subordination of science to art, in a man scientifically educated, is a proof of immense natural spring and elasticity in the artistic faculty itself. A never-ending subject of wonder to me in Haden's work is that it is not only art, but *pure* art,—art reigning unopposed in its own realm; and that the scientific training of the workman has not power to embarrass him, but is easily laid aside, as the old knights laid aside their stiff plate-armour to take their ease in robes of pliant silk.

This etcher has had much against him: the constant application of energy to other objects, the direction of attention to studies of a different order; but one thing in his hard professional life has been favourable,—he has learned what it is to observe and what it is to work. The miserable failure of the mass of amateurs is due not so much to their having other work, as to their having *no* work, to their lamentable ignorance of the

nature of work generally. When men have not some great pursuit, they abandon culture when they leave school, and (as a distinguished living poet said to me in a letter) "content themselves with the current enlightenment of the epoch." But Mr. Haden has had for his main pursuit one of the noblest and most stimulating of all studies, so that he has never lost the habit of acquisition.

Of his place and rank among etchers, it may be necessary now to speak. He is frankly a pupil of Rembrandt, but so thoroughly modern that tradition never stands between him and nature. Haden has nothing whatever in common with the English school of etching, and is only mentioned in this place because he happens to be an Englishman, not as a member of the school. His manner is so entirely in harmony with the nature of the art, that no man's work, except Rembrandt's, is a safer example in this respect. There is never, in an etching by Haden, that uncomfortable fatigue which wearies us so frequently in modern work; he never even wishes to transgress the limits of the art, but works happily within them, as a sea-captain commands his own ship. Consequently, he never imitates engraving, or betrays a hankering after other methods, or wants etching to do more than it naturally can do. As every quality has its corresponding fault, it may be added, however, that Mr. Haden is so rapid and decided in manner, that he misses, by his very decision, the charm of a certain rare and precious and exquisite *in*decision which one or two first-rate men have had, and which is the last result of art. His temper is rather active and rapidly intuitive, than quietly contemplative; and though his etchings prove that he is capable of reverie and rest, he is so only at rare moments, his general habit being emphatic and decisive. Of his imaginative power, there is only evidence of this kind, that he turns what he sees into something interesting and good; but what he could do without nature or sketches,

I am unable to say. It is certain that he is not a literalist, not a prosaic workman; and though the imaginative faculty in this case may not be strong enough to be relied upon without reference to nature, it is certainly strong enough to transform and interpret nature.

Of the kind of material made use of by this artist, it may be observed, first, that he is a master of foliage, that he has drawn some trees magnificently, both as to wood and leaves; there is no better stem or branch-drawing than his in all contemporary art. He draws boats and buildings well, and water in the common varieties of calm and ripple, but he does not seem to have attempted waves or shipping. He draws land with great truth, especially pieces of river-bank, but apparently does not possess any especial knowledge of mountain structure or mountain effects. So his cloud studies are confined to what may be seen in the lowlands. An etcher having Haden's technical power, and perfect leisure for some years, might do great and new things in mountainous countries, if he had the right passion for their sublimities. These victories are reserved for the future; mountains have been painted, but never etched.

Out of Study Window.—The sky here may be a useful example to etchers, as much for the prudence of the artist as his courage. He has done those things which he ought to have done, and he has also left undone those things which he ought not to have done. This negative side of duty is, for clever and accomplished artists, perhaps the more difficult of the two. With the single exception of Whistler, there is not another etcher in England who would not have killed this sky in trying to finish it. These masses of heavy cumulus might have tempted an ordinary etcher into a painful struggle after imitative modelling, which would have certainly ended in the loss of motion and energy. It would be possible, no doubt, to do work even in etching more imitative than this bold

interpretation, but any truth which long labour might have attained would have been dearly purchased by the slightest diminution in the unity and vivacity of impression. A natural sky, even of the most slowly-moving clouds, is always so transient that copyism is out of the question, and the more rapid the memorandum the better does it harmonize with the floating nature of the thing. What an etcher most needs to record is, first, the composition, and then so much of the relations of tone as may be necessary to suggest, but not imitate, the natural light and shade. Whilst doing so much as this, the artist should miss no opportunity of noting and accentuating the lines of energy and motion.

Sunset on the Thames.—The indications of cloud-form here are much lighter than the strong sketching in the preceding study, but the effect of light is given with such magnificent force that the whole sky flames. As a proof of the artist's subtle observation, may be mentioned the horizontal elongation of the sun's disk behind the cloud which, as it were, seems to draw it out into an oval, a common optical illusion. The broad bright river flows swiftly past the sun, bearing the laden barges. Etching of this kind is purely interpretative: etching may be imitative sometimes; it is marvellously imitative in the work of Jules Jacquemart, but Haden works always on the far higher principle of interpretation, and has never done so more conspicuously than in this instance. The wild scrawling in the upper sky, the thick black strokes which to the right do duty as solar rays, the faint scratches of dry-point which cross the field of intensest light, the two broad bands to the left which radiate like the sails of a windmill, and are in fact shadows in the misty air—all these things, and the undulating lines which mark the flow of the rippling river, are expressional expedients, which no simple imitator could ever discover or apply. He might scrawl as wildly and scratch as faintly, but it would not be the right scrawling and scratching, and he

might leave great spaces of white paper like that in the upper sky, but he could not flood it with this ethereal fire.

Whistler's house, at Old Chelsea.—It would have been interesting to future students of etching, if Mr. Haden had informed us which of these houses is inhabited by the great etcher of the Thames. He has been kind enough to let us know where Mr. Greaves, the boat-builder, carries on his very useful occupation, but the Thames has had many boat-builders and only one Whistler. There is magnificent power of drawing in this etching, and brilliant arrangement of lights and darks. The foreshortening of the bows of the barges, as seen from the sterns, is as good a piece of work as one might hope to find in the Royal Academy, and there is not a marine painter living who would have drawn these barges better. Their immense force as darks gives great delicacy to the bridge, and the light foliage beyond it; and their cumbrous weight as a united mass adds greatly to the thread-like tenuity of the rigging in the distance. Of the figures in the foreground, it is fair to say that they are neither better nor worse than Turner's. We have a woman in a state of much distress because three little dogs are running after her, and she displays her legs in a manner so pathetic as to excite the sympathy of everybody but those two watermen with the poles, one of whom seems rather amused at the incident. Both woman and watermen are in a high degree Turnerian; that is, they are true landscape-painter's figures, not to be judged in themselves, but with reference to the houses and boats they accompany. Rude as they are, they give life to the scene, and their execution is in harmony with that of the inanimate objects about them.

The Towing-path.—A sketch in dry-point, with a rather high horizon and somewhat empty foreground, on which a lady is walking with a Skye-terrier. It is a river scene, where the stream is divided by an island. This island and both shores are enriched with foliage, which is re-

flected in the glassy water. There is some undulation towards the foreground, but it is smooth and bright, and reflects the sky.

When persons, not much accustomed to etching, come across a dry-point, they are always very much taken by its softness; but if the tones of dry-point are richer, its lines are poorer than the etched line. In pure etching, Mr. Haden would have drawn better poplars than these, and the other trees would have had more variety and richer detail. The best work here is not in the trees, nor in the sky, but the water. The reflection of the central [illegible] the island is as soft and limpid as we may desire. When water is not so absolutely still as to become a mirror, but yet sufficiently smooth to reflect softly, it can be rendered as well with the dry-point as any other instrument, for the lines needed are all either straight lines, vertical, or horizontal, or else the gentlest curves. The rich quality of dry-point work gives the softness of such reflections perfectly.

A Sunset in Tipperary.—If the reader cares to compare the powers of etching and dry-point, he may place this dry-point side by side with the etching of part of the same subject which appeared in the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review.** The difference is altogether in favour of dry-point if richness of tone is the quality sought, and just as favourable to etching if we value variety of line. Much will depend on the particular impression to which the reader may have access. The one before me is so clogged with ink that the signature is a blot, and the nearer trees a mass of undistinguishable dark. But I remember other impressions printed less heavily, in which all the richness of the subject was preserved without this excessive confusion. To judge a dry-point fairly, we must be past the stage in which its softness strikes and captivates us, for this softness is merely a necessary property in the process, and does

* See *Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, No. 3, New Series, January 1867, p. 119.

not of itself imply merit in the executant. The scene here is one of those charming glimpses of river, where the stream reflects the sky before it hides itself again under the dark woods. It is evening, and the time seems later than sunset; the copy before me might pass for late twilight, so lost are the details in the inky depths of shade. Landscape art is often dear to us from its connexion with healthy pleasures and agreeable reminiscences. Let us suppose, that we may the better enjoy this plate, that we have descended the river so far in a canoe, and are pausing here whilst the sun sets beyond the dark forest. It must, of course, be a river wholly unknown to us, and we ought to feel a little anxiety and apprehension about our twilight course through those solemn woods.

Shere Mill-pond, Surrey.—The preparation for this volume has compelled me to examine all the most notable etchings which have been produced since the invention of the art. In the course of these studies, I have looked over several thousand plates, and, having selected two or three hundred of the best, weighed their relative merits with the most scrupulous care. The reader will, therefore, do me the justice to believe that any expression of opinion to which I commit myself has been preceded by long deliberation. It is easy to blame; and censure has always this element of safety, that there is imperfection, or at least limitation, in all human endeavour, and that he who discovers faults places himself on a judicial seat, whilst humble admiration implies some acknowledgment of inferiority. A great critic of literature observed to me, that it needed courage to praise without reserve; and there is so little reserve in what I am going to say, that I need this courage now.

With the single exception of one plate, by Claude, this is the finest etching of a landscape subject that has ever been executed in the world.

The plate by Claude, alluded to above, is the one known as "the Bouvier." We shall have more to say of Claude's

masterpiece in its due place. Such superiorities as it may have over this plate of Haden's are compensated by other and different superiorities in the English master, and the two etchings may fairly divide our suffrages. In all fine art, strength and delicacy are the extremes of expressional power, and the stronger the strength and the more delicate the delicacy, the larger in this sense is the compass of the artist. In this plate we have both, and both in the supreme degree. The strength is not expressed by violence, but by the unimaginable richness of the great soft masses of near foliage, and the rapid sketching of the nearest reeds. The wild duck is put in with a few incisive lines of dry-point, so true in movement that the bird is set before us with a vital force. The heavy body hangs from the lifting wings, and the head peers forward in the alarm of sudden flight. Under the reeds the water is dark with full reflection, but where the wild duck has just quitted it, there is a bright confusion of momentary disturbance. The smooth little wavelets play softly amongst the reeds, and their liquid swelling and the flight of the bird that caused them are the only notes that break a melody of repose. And as to the right hand we have foliage in the utmost fulness of great masses, so in the centre and to the left of the composition we have it in its slenderest grace. There is no contrast in human or animal form so marked and extreme as this. From the wild duck to the heron, from the ox to the giraffe, the transition is not so great as that from the orbed immensity of the full-foliaged chestnut to the slimness of the young poplar, whose leaves may be almost counted, and whose trunk may be grasped with the hand. But all these things are obvious, and may be easily expressed in words; that which is not so obvious nor so easily written about, is the subtle play of soft gradations like the modulations of tenderest music; the passage from all that is richest and fullest to all that is thinnest and clearest, a transition managed without abruptness, without violence, yet passing from extreme to extreme.

House of Benjamin Davis, Smith (*Newcastle-in-Emlyn, South Wales*).—This may be taken as fairly representative of Mr. Haden's sketches on copper. A sketch of this kind may be easily done in three hours, if the artist is clever enough to do it at all, and it may be done as conveniently in the acid bath as out of it. Mr. Haden has a way of leaving large white spaces in his foreground, so that sometimes his compositions do not seem solidly based; but the advantage of a white space is undeniable when there is a fair excuse for leaving one; it affords repose to the eye, and gives by contrast a value to the blacks, and consequently a brilliance to the whole work, which are not otherwise so easily attainable. Plates done at one sitting have an advantage on the score of freshness, but they can scarcely be either rich in detail or complete in tonality, and when good they are rather of the nature of artistic memoranda, than works of deliberate purpose. In this case, although the vehicles cast shadows, and the house is in full light, there is a curious absence of illumination on the foliage, and the plate has a confused look which is not altogether satisfactory.

Early Morning in Richmond Park.—There is a faint little inscription in dry-point to the left of the plate, from one of the songs of Shakespeare, "The lark at heaven's gate sings," and in the space of perfectly white paper, which is here made to represent the bright early sky, the bird is faintly visible. This poetical quotation may have been added when the plate was retouched, for there is abundant dry-point work, and a roughening of the copper on the foliage, which indicate labours subsequent to those with the needle. But whether the quotation occurred to the artist in the presence of nature, or not, the conception of the plate itself had a poetry of its own, and it is filled with the freshness of morning. The contrast of light and dark on the trunks of the great trees is somewhat violent and excessive, and would not stand the test, the one true test of tonality, of translation into colour. If a painter took

this etching and tried to make a picture from it, he could not preserve this violence of contrast, for he could not paint his tree with pure flake white on the side where the sun strikes it, and pure ivory black on the other. There is a sooty heaviness in these shades which really injures the effect whilst apparently adding to its force; but the trunks are drawn with perfect knowledge of their structure, and a masterly indication of bark. There is a little tree on the lower land, the summit of whose foliage is caught by the sunshine, and as it were, burnt by it in a glitter of silvery flame as light as the white sky itself. This is an exaggeration, but a permissible one, for it helps the expression of splendour. There is an unaccountable *saillure* to the left under the sun which, whatever it may have been intended to mean, expresses no object or appearance of objects visible in distant landscape; but though the plate has obvious defects, it has the one great merit, which in etching makes almost any defect pardonable, the unity of a genuine impression.

Battersea Reach.—The same feeling which suggested the introduction of the lark in the preceding subject, has suggested the balloon in this; it helps to give the sense of space and air, and reminds us that the white paper there is not to be paper for us, but atmosphere. Mr. Haden's love for large white spaces was never more strikingly manifested than in the last or published state of this etching. In the earlier state the river was crowded with boats, but now these have been removed wherever it reflects the sky, and a vast bright surface is left unbroken, a surface so bright that it is out of relation to the actual whiteness of the sky, which we must fancy a little brighter still. The massive sketching of the buildings on the opposite shore adds, by its extreme solidity, to the curious appearance of suspension between two voids. This crowded shore, with its houses and prisons of stone, seems to hang like a planet in the pure ether, or the Island of Laputa in the air. This idea is the artistic motive of

the work, and the strange charm of the etching may be due to a vague sense of the unexpressed analogy between these substantial buildings of Battersea suspended between two infinities, and resting apparently upon nothing, and the stern prose of the life of man between the two eternities.

CHAPTER VIII.

CRUIKSHANK AND DOYLE.

FEW more interesting subjects could occupy a writer on art than the various and truly original genius of Cruikshank, but I cannot speak of him here with the fulness which his inventive faculty deserves, because the art of etching is, in his plates, so often subordinated to the purposes of the caricaturist, that artistic quality is hardly ever their principal aim, and it would be foreign to the design of a work of this kind to enter largely into the discussion of merits which, however deserving of honourable recognition, are often moral and intellectual rather than artistic. Art, with a great social or political purpose, is seldom pure fine art; artistic aims are usually lost sight of in the anxiety to hit the social or political mark, and though the caricaturist may have great natural faculty for art, it has not a fair chance of cultivation. It would be a mistake, in a volume intended to strengthen the position of etching as a fine art, to direct attention to work whose interest is wholly different, for, to criticise them would be an injustice to the caricaturist, and to speak much of their peculiar powers, a digression. The reader may remember the exhibition of Cruikshank's works, which took place a few years ago, at Exeter Hall. There was a large oil-painting in the room, representing the bad effects of drinking too much alcohol. Its social purpose was no doubt excellent, but it lay outside of artistic criticism, because there was no attempt at any

one artistic excellence; no arrangement of form, no light and shade, no synthesis of colour. And so it is with very many of Cruikshank's etchings; they are full of keen satire and happy invention, and their moral purpose is always good; but all these qualities are compatible with a carelessness of art which is not to be tolerated in any one but a professed caricaturist.

There is, however, in Cruikshank, an artist within or behind the caricaturist, and this artist is a personage of exceptional endowment. His invention is vivid, and his power of drawing the figures invented is singularly sprightly and precise. There are etchings by Cruikshank, though these are not numerous in proportion to the mass of his great labours, which are as excellent artistically as they are notable for genius and wit, where the stroke of the needle is as happy as the thought, and where the student of etching may find models, as the student of manners finds a record or a suggestion. In etchings of this high class, Cruikshank carries one great virtue of the art to perfection—its simple frankness. He is so direct and unaffected, that only those who know the difficulties of etching can appreciate the power that lies behind his unpretending skill; there is never, in his most admirable plates, the trace of a vain effort.

I never regretted the hard necessity which forbids an art critic to shut his eyes to artistic shortcomings more heartily than I do now in speaking of Richard Doyle. Considered as commentaries on human character, his etchings are so full of wit and intelligence, so bright with playful satire and manly relish of life, that I scarcely know how to write sentences with a touch at once light enough and keen enough to describe them. But they are of no value as works of art; Doyle never selects a line as the great men do, and he does not seem to take the least interest in local colour or chiaroscuro. Though shading is employed to give projection to the personages, Doyle's etchings are in reality conceived only in outline,

and his interpretation of nature is, when considered from the artistic point of view, so artless as to be almost puerile. When he feebly attempts any effect of light, he is always lost, and knows it; in these cases he will frankly abandon the effect in the same etching, when it becomes inconveniently difficult. His sense of the nature of material is quite undeveloped, and he never draws any object as if he had looked at it. This absence of imitative study is not, in Doyle, due to any noble abstraction, but is mere defect of training or carelessness of art. It is probable that this artlessness is an essential element in the complex influences of his caricatures; the artistic statement is so thoroughly *naïf*, that we enjoy the satire the more, just as we laugh more heartily at a child's portrait of his papa than at the serious efforts of the scientific portrait-painter. But a critic who is anxious to obtain for etching the sort of consideration which is due to it, cannot allow his readers to retain the impression that such work as this of Doyle is what he understands by "etching," and recommends as art, and it is a positive misfortune that the popular idea of what etching is capable of should be so often derived from work of this kind, the circulation of which, from its connexion with successful novels, is usually much more extensive than that of artistic masterpieces. Fifty contemporary Englishmen know Doyle's illustrations of "The Newcomes" for one who remembers Wilkie's "Pope examining a Censer;" and when etching is mentioned in general society, the associations which the word calls up in the minds of the majority have less connexion with the treasures of the British Museum than with the pleasant companions of our domestic leisure.

The allusion to "The Newcomes" makes it impossible for me to conclude these observations without acknowledgment of the all but inestimable dramatic value of the illustrations which accompanied it. Illustrations to imaginative literature are too frequently an intrusion and an impertinence, but these really added to our enjoyment

of a great literary masterpiece, and Doyle's conception of the colonel, of Honeyman, of Lady Kew, is accepted at once as authentic portraiture. In Ethel he was less happy which was a misfortune, as she was the heroine of the book; but many of the minor characters were successes of the most striking and indisputable kind. Gandish and the other artists, the military gentlemen, the dubious Englishmen and foreigners, are all set before us with a veracity that is not the less profound that it is illuminated in all its depths by the light of a genial humour.

CRUIKSHANK. *The Folly of Crime.*—The plate is oblong and upright, the centre of it is occupied by an oval which is enclosed by a prisoner's chain. Outside this oval frame are ten minor subjects. The central composition represents the edge of an abyss with a precipice. Smoke and flame rise from the abyss, and near the edge of the precipice lies the corpse of a murdered man. A demon is plunging into the flame; this demon holds a vessel on his head with both hands; the vessel contains jewels and money and bank-notes. A powerfully-built man, having the aspect of a felon, has quitted the corpse to clutch the treasure; he has planted his foot on a stone which has given way, and falls from the precipice. The jewels rise as if they were serpents to bite his hand; the bank-notes fly away in the flame and are burnt. Twelve demons, having glaring eyes and grinning teeth, congregate in the dark sky over the man's head, Some of them point at him derisively, and he wears a fool's cap. The minor subjects are as follows:—(1) A man in bed with a heavy weight on his breast; two hands issue from a cloud, one bearing a pair of scales, the other a flaming sword. Many serpents come from under the pillow and play about his head. (2) Two men on a treadmill. (3) A prisoner in the corner of his den is visited by his gaoler, who is bringing him water to drink. (4–5) Two prisoners in chains. (6) Criminal in a fool's

cap, lying on a heap of dung, and dying or very ill, in the last extremity of poverty; on the wall behind him is a placard offering fifty pounds reward. (7) A man in a fool's cap, starting at his own shadow; there is an advertisement on the wall offering a hundred pounds reward. (8) A man running away with bags containing a hundred pounds each, and putting his foot in a trap. (9) Man bearing a log of wood, on which is inscribed, "for fourteen years;" there is a ship in the distance. (10) Man dragging a log after him chained to his foot, and bearing upon his shoulders a coffin on which is inscribed, "for life;" before him is his grave with his spade sticking up in it. The sea and a ship show that he is a convict in a penal colony.

This elaborate plate is as good an example as could be chosen of Cruikshank's moral teaching. Its lesson, like those of Hogarth's, is made as direct and obvious as possible, and even repeated under various different forms. The moral is too coarse and palpable to be quite satisfactory to a very thoughtful observer; great criminals are not always fools, if folly is only to be measured by the troubles into which it brings itself; but the true philosophy of a subject so intricate as this would be too subtle for the caricaturist, who simply tells us that Jack or Patrick committed murder or felony, and was sent to prison, and the treadmill, and Botany Bay. Cruikshank's argument is, that because Jack by crime exposed himself to punishment, and got punished, therefore Jack was a fool to risk consequences so unpleasant. But might not the same prudential argument be turned against innocence itself? And if we were as clever caricaturists as Cruikshank, might we not compose a plate illustrative of the folly of virtue? If dishonesty lands its more artless practitioners on dunghills, it also not unfrequently rewards its craftier votaries with considerable comfort, and even luxury; and the readiness to lie when the world requires it has saved many a man from social degradation.

Some things ought to be said and done which, if estimated in this prudential way, are follies, and nothing is proved against a criminal by merely showing that his act may lead to unpleasant results. A taste for reading the Bible, which is not now considered blameable in this country, has brought hundreds within the terrible grip of the Inquisition. Bad deeds are not distinguishable from good deeds by the reward they bring to the agent; and if homicide leads one man to hard labour for life, so there have been instances where it has opened paths to the loftiest social ambition. It is probable that virtuous men enjoy a serene independence of outward circumstances to which the vicious never attain; failure does not fret them, nor hardship weary them so much; but this inward peace is rather beyond our Hogarths and Cruikshanks, and it is even beyond the sympathy of our common public, which, in its commendable love for good folks, is never quite content unless the novelist rewards them with a carriage and pair. And even this inward peace of the virtuous is not always to be counted upon, for virtuous people are not always altogether satisfied with themselves.

Without being one of the most remarkable instances of Cruikshank's unusual precision with the point, this etching is accomplished and even brilliant in execution. There are some admirable gradations on surfaces, as, for instance, that on the left leg of the large central figure, and there is a choice of means affording powerful contrasts of manipulation. Observe the vigorous touches on the detached stone, and the handling on the figure itself. The sea and sky in the little subject mentioned above as number 9, are very simple in method, but as good as the bits of distance in some of the most celebrated old masters.

The Elves and the Shoemaker.—There was a shoemaker who worked very hard and was very honest. He had nothing left but leather for one pair of shoes; he cut it out and laid it aside at night, and next morning found

his shoes made. As the workmanship was very good, there was no difficulty in finding a purchaser, so the poor shoemaker bought more leather and cut out several pairs of shoes, and laid the pieces in the same place at night, and the next day found the shoes finished with the same excellent workmanship. The process was repeated, till the shoemaker became rich; then he and his wife determined to watch at night, to see how the shoes were made, and they discovered that two industrious little elves came and worked for them. Then the shoemaker and his wife resolved in their gratitude to make clothes for these elves, because they were naked, and they made little garments and laid them in the room and watched for the elves, who, on their arrival, dressed themselves with great glee and ran away capering out of the door, never again to enter it. But the shoemaker and his wife remained rich ever after.

This pleasant tale, in a well-known book, Grimm's "German Stories," was so well adapted to the genius of Cruikshank, that it has suggested one of the very best of all his etchings. The two elves, especially the nearer one, who is putting on his breeches, are drawn with a point at once so precise and vivacious, so full of keen fun and inimitably happy invention, that I have not found their equals in comic etching anywhere, and they are as supreme in their own department of the art as Haden's "Shere Mill-pond," or Claude's "Bouvier" in theirs. It is said that these elves are regarded with peculiar affection by the great master who created them, which is only natural, for he has a right to be proud of them. The picturesque details of the room are etched with the same felicitous intelligence, but the marvel of the work is in the expression of the strange little faces, and the energy of the comical wee limbs.

Return from a delightful Trip on the Continent.—This is a fair specimen of Cruikshank's simple manner. It is a scene of sea-sickness; a boat full of passengers, male

and female, are landing from a continental steamer. The sea is very rough, and in the little transit the passengers suffer acutely. One old gentleman, who bends over the water, as people in this lamentable condition are wont to do, has lost his hat and wig, and there is intentional satire in the resemblance between the cap of another passenger, whose loose ear-flaps are lifted by the wind, and the head-gear consecrated to fools. Two thick sailors are rowing, and the women are in the utmost misery and confusion. The adjuncts are sketched as suggestively as those in the woodcuts of John Leech. The spray leaps high, and the steam and smoke from the funnels of the ship are carried away in straight lines by the gale.

Dougal Mac Callum and Hutcheon.—An illustration of an incident in "Redgauntlet," narrated as follows by the novelist:—

"When midnight came, and the house was quiet as the grave, sure enough the silver whistle sounded as sharp and shrill as if Sir Robert were blowing it, and up got the twa auld serving-men and tottered into the room where the dead man lay. Hutcheon saw aneugh at the first glance, for there were torches in the room which showed him the foul fiend, in his ain shape, seated on the Laird's coffin."

This is one of the best of Cruikshank's many book-illustrations. The union of comedy with solemn circumstances gives free expression to both the great faculties of the caricaturist. Cruikshank is a comic etcher, and the greatest comic etcher who ever lived, but his mind realizes the solemnity of death. This coffin lying in state, with a monkey perched on the top of it, and two domestics horror-stricken at the demoniacal apparition, is a subject very suitable to a genius in which a sense of the ridiculous co-exists with the most tragic earnestness.

DOYLE. *A Student of the Old Masters.*—Colonel Newcome is sitting in the National Gallery, trying to see the

merits of the old masters. Observe the enormous exaggeration of aerial perspective resorted to in order to detach the figure of the Colonel. The people behind him must be several miles away, the floor of the room, if judged by aerial perspective only, is as broad as the lake of Lucerne.

His Highness.—Colonel Newcome is saluted by the Indian. Observe the entire absence of local colour. The Colonel's black hat and blue coat, and Barnes Newcome's black evening costume have exactly the same weight of colour as Colonel Newcome's white shirt-frill.

A Meditation.—Clive is meditating in his studio on the vanity of mediocre painting. The opportunity was a good one for clever sketching of still life, but it has not been seized upon or cared for, and Doyle has taken no interest in the things that surround the artist, which are sketched quite unobservantly.

CHAPTER IX.

SAMUEL PALMER.

ETCHERS may be divided broadly into two classes; the true etchers who show the etched line frankly, and rely upon it, and make the most of it, such as Rembrandt, Vandyke, Whistler, and Haden; and the false etchers, who, though they may be exquisite artists, do not understand the value of the naked line, but hide it under more or less successful imitations of brush-work or burin-work. When this book was first projected, it was resolved to exclude the false etchers altogether, but on further investigation, it became evident that such severity would compel the writer to pass in silence almost all modern English work; it was finally decided to speak of the false etchers with the kind of respect which is due to them, a respect in many cases amounting to veneration for noble artistic qualities, though limited on technical grounds by the falsity of their method.

In using the word "false" in this purely technical sense, let me not be understood to imply that there is any defect of truth or sincerity in the artistic interpretation of nature. Samuel Palmer is a false etcher, in this technical sense, but he is one of the truest, most sincere, most richly-gifted artists who ever used water-colour, and his etchings themselves are amongst the most exquisite and admirable works of art ever wrought in England. Works of art! at a time when, amongst the enormous production of painted canvasses and etched or engraved coppers going

on in Europe, works of art are yet by no means of frequent occurrence.

The aim of Samuel Palmer, as an executant, is a certain richness and tenderness always subordinated to feeling. It never runs away with him, but pauses for the varying thought. His etchings are pure poetry, every gleam and hint in them is due to some sweet ineffable sentiment. I never spoke to him, and do not praise his work from any personal interest in its author; but during the negotiations about the plate which is given herewith, he wrote to me one or two letters, and asked amongst other things if I had studied the etchings of Claude. In asking this, he wrote a sentence of delicate appreciation which I thought it would be well to disseminate and preserve, and so begged permission to quote it. "His execution," said Samuel Palmer, "is of that highest kind which has no independent essence, but lingers and hesitates with the thought, and is lost and found in a bewilderment of intricate beauty." In this sentence we have the key to the writer's own ways of work as an etcher: he dislikes execution, however brilliant, which is not subordinate to the thought; or, perhaps, to put it more accurately, the best execution, in his view, is tentative, and submissively waits whilst the mind seeks, always humbly following and endeavouring to obey, never hurrying the executive processes till they get ahead of the perceptive and inventive processes. And I venture to add that the beautiful sentence in which Samuel Palmer described the excellence of Claude, is accurately descriptive of his own excellence, and I would have said of Samuel Palmer, if I had known how to write anything so good, just these words, "His execution is of that highest kind which has no independent essence, but lingers and hesitates with the thought, and is lost and found in a bewilderment of intricate beauty."

And yet, I have said that Samuel Palmer's work was false etching, and can false etching be execution of

the highest kind? The habit of writing quite sincerely lands us, it appears, in embarrassing contradictions. This artist's method is entirely honest; it is the method which best interprets his ideas, and so it is execution morally and poetically for him of the highest kind. But there have been aquafortists whose execution was equally sincere, equally lingering and hesitating with the thought, and yet true etching in the strictest technical sense. The difference is, that Samuel Palmer is less a true etcher than a noble painter expressing himself with the etching-needle, and however marvellous is the work which he has done on copper, I am inclined to believe that the kind of engraving which would suit his genius best is not etching, but mezzo-tint. Nevertheless, I rejoice that Samuel Palmer has done these etchings, because they prove the versatility and adaptability of the art. He has abandoned the strongest point of etching, the vivacity and freedom of the etched line, and he has relied upon qualities which the vulgar do not suppose etching to possess, and which even the most informed judges know to be difficult of attainment by its processes. He has not sought the freedom and keen accent which the method suggests, but has compelled it to give what his own artistic feeling most desired, namely, a most luxuriant indecision, a powerful and elaborate tonality. His plates are not true etchings, relatively to the art, because they do not insist upon its especial and peculiar qualities; but they are indeed true relatively to the artist, for they express his profoundest love.

The Early Ploughman.—As this etching is given herewith, and as it is a very perfect example of Samuel Palmer's manner of work, we may study it closely enough to learn the principles of his style. If the reader will entirely detach his mind from all preconceived notions of what good etching has hitherto been or ought to be, and simply look upon this work as a piece of artistic expression, without reference to the means used, he can

scarcely fail to receive the sensation of richness and beauty. The etching affects us as a picture does; it is mellow and full, like work from a flowing brush. There is an intentional softness and indecision about the contours, so that it is as difficult to find an outline as in a late oil-picture by Turner. Look, for example, at the ploughman and oxen, you cannot find the line that separates them from the landscape; a few mysterious gleams, a few tenderly gradated and apparently shapeless passages of shade bring the team and its driver into the dim light of the dawn. So in the bridge to the left, where a pure etcher would have given frank lines of structure, the utmost care is taken to avoid them; and even when, as in the black marking of the arches or of the tree trunk which comes across them, there are what appear to be something like lines, these are not true and simple lines, but elaborate imitations of brush-work with the etching-needle. All through the foreground we have the same steady resolve, carried out with infinite mastery of resource, to obtain as nearly as possible the results of painting, and you cannot find a pure etched line a quarter of an inch long that dares to stand on its own merit. By a system of laborious retouching and stoppings-out, the herbage is everywhere tenderly and artistically suggested, and the etched line as carefully annihilated. The sky is completely successful, for it well renders the first flush of morning on a roof of undulating cloud; but the success has been purchased at a great and evident cost of toil, and many parts of it bear a marked resemblance to the best modern engravings.

The Herdsman.—A herdsman is returning with two oxen to a farm in a little dell. The moon has just risen behind a dark hill, and her light catches the edges of the roofs, and illuminates the ascending smoke. Over the herdsman is a very rich mass of foliage, whose leaves are touched with light. All the observations on the technical qualities of the plate just criticised, apply in their full force to this. The commonest defect of etching, a tendency to thinness and meagreness, is here so entirely avoided, that

the most striking characteristic of the plate is an indescribable luxuriance and wealth. The art which has been reproached for poverty and hated for harshness, as if it were a prison of wiry unpleasantness, is here amenable rather to the charge of self-indulgent luxury, and the eye rests on surfaces of velvet and of down.

The impression of softness and richness which this etching at once conveys, is due to the admirable management of its tonality, and the jealous care with which every variety of form that could be indicated consistently with the effect, has been preserved and accentuated. The little gleams of light along the ridges of the roofs reveal the various curves caused by the yielding or irregularity of the timbers, and even in such a minor detail as the goad on the herdsman's shoulder, the utmost care is taken to indicate its departures from mechanical straightness. The leaves of the great tree are near enough for many of them to be distinctly seen, but every little cluster has cost a separate thought.

The Rising Moon.—A moonrise, with sheep in the foreground, and a mansion in the valley below. This etching was published in a series issued for the Art Union of London, 1857, and may be familiar to readers who have followed the publications of our school. The effect of moonrise is given with great pictorial success, and the composition is interesting and complete. Etched lines are here somewhat more visible, at least in the sky and foreground, than in either of the two preceding plates, but they are not lines selected for expression; they are boundaries of spaces evidently conceived by the artist as touches with the brush. The sky is especially curious in method, and successfully conveys the idea of broken and illuminated cloud. Its execution is a little hard and severe, and so is that of the foreground; this is in order to give, by contrast, an effect of rich obscurity to the hill and trees, and of softness to the fleeces of the sheep. The poetry of the wide mysterious plain behind the shepherd needs, I think, no commentary.

CHAPTER X.

MILLAIS AND HUNT.

THE pre-Raphaelite discipline, which was a protest against inadequate synthesis, and a temporary return to analysis, was highly unfavourable to etching so long as it lasted. No true pre-Raphaelite, so long as he remained a pre-Raphaelite, has ever produced even a tolerable etching. The spirit of etching is so directly opposed to the minute and fatiguing manipulation of these painters, that any reconciliation between them is perfectly hopeless.

A great French author said, that only the dullest authors ever attempt to exhaust a subject, that men of wit and ability are careful rather to present the flower of it. The surest way to kill an etching is to try to exhaust nature by laborious imitation, and the most promising state of mind for an aquafortist is a healthy power of resistance to the overwhelming abundance of materials. Let me illustrate this difference by a reference to literary studies. No one who has ever felt a noble anxiety to cultivate himself by literature, can have failed to apprehend, in the presence of the infinity of books, the inexorable necessity for choice. We who have to read many books, learn in time not only the art of selecting the work to be studied, but beyond this an art of discovering in that particular work the pages that we need, and even in reading these pages we acquire a habit of detailing the thought or fact that is useful to us from the mass of thoughts or facts with which we have no concern. This is the talent of

the accomplished aquafortists, and the great men have it in the superlative degree. But pre-Raphaelitism had a moral objection to it; this free choice seemed wanting in conscientiousness, and, with the best intentions, the members of the sect did with the book of nature what the old lady did with her Bible—the old lady who thought that a chapter was a chapter, and read with equal edification the pedigree of King David and the Sermon on the Mount.

It would be an interesting subject of inquiry why this incapacity for selection is more tolerable in painting than it is in etching, but we have not room for it here. The fact is, however, that a painter may find in elaboration itself a sort of refuge for the distressed, and hide his want of choice under a cloak of laborious embroidery. But for some reason connected with the natural liberty of the process, an etcher who tries to do this is detected on the instant, and we know that his work is ruined.

Millais would produce some good etchings if he took to the art now, and did his best in it; but the singular inequality of his genius would of course be as evident in this art as in any other, and his successes would alternate with failures. The condition of mind which produces good etchings is rare even in those who are capable of it. There are two elements in pictorial art; the direct original expression, and the art which is taught and learned. Painters who work all day and every day, cannot supply a continuous stream of fresh and original inspirations; but when this fails them they resort to the acquired mechanism of their trade, and work on industriously still. Nine-tenths of the work in the exhibitions is this acquired business; but etching is based on the rejection of this business, and depends on fresh inspiration only; so that even the great etchers cannot command their faculty, but are dependent, like poets, on the recurrence of fortunate hours. The more closely an artistic faculty approaches to genius, the less readily does it obey the laws of in-

dustrial regularity. A common journalist may write to order, in time to go to press; but Tennyson could not make an idyll in that way, nor Gounod a melody. So Millais, who has all the nature of true genius, paints badly to-day and superbly to-morrow; and if he etched much would produce some of the best work, and some of the worst, ever executed in Europe; and the difference would be even more striking in his etching than in his painting, for the reason given above.

Holman Hunt is a man of very different endowment. Some years ago he had great purposes, lying quite outside of the range of etching, and though so insular in feeling that only Englishmen could understand him, he won a reputation which seemed to have solid grounds of durability. Since then the great purposes seem to have been abandoned, and now he has either small purposes, or no purposes, and wastes a skill acquired in the heat of early ambition on subjects of slight artistic or intellectual interest. But neither in the ardent labours of his youth, nor the colder productions of his completed manhood, is there the least trace of the peculiar gifts which distinguish the true etchers from painters and engravers, and the few plates of his which have been published are dangerous as examples, in exact proportion to the importance and authority of his name. This is one of those cases which, like that of David Roberts, do not leave to the critic the agreeable alternative of silence. Obscure painters may etch as badly as they like, and we will gladly let them alone, but when famous painters disseminate practically a conception of etching which we know to be false, we are compelled to do violence to our gratitude for their painted work, and say so.

MILLAIS. *The Young Mother.*—This is the twenty-ninth plate in the etchings published for the Art Union of London, in 1857. It is the best etching by Millais that I have seen. The figure of the young woman is very

beautifully sketched, as she bends over her infant and kisses the palm of its tiny hand. The lines which indicate the folds of her dress are, in the lights, very free and true; but in the shaded part, the cross-hatching made use of is not quite so purely etcher's work. The Highland cottages and stretch of shore in the distance are very good.

HOLMAN HUNT. *The Day in the Country.*—A couple from London have gone in the omnibus to see their country-relations. The plate will be found in a selection of twelve etchings by the Etching Club, published by Mr. Cundall, of New Bond Street, in 1865. It may be taken as a representative example of the worst defects of the English school. There is no freedom or grace of line, and the composition is quite remarkable for its awkwardness. It is difficult to characterise work of this kind without employing words which would seem savagely malevolent, but the condition of mind in which it can be deliberately executed is on all points opposed to the condition of the noble aquafortists. Good etchings are not always beautiful, but when beauty is not their object they compensate for its absence by some other kind of power, and though this power may not in every instance be pleasing in its effects, it is sure to be artistic. What I condemn in this etching is not its ugliness, for Rembrandt himself had no objection to ugliness, but it is the downright Philistinism inherent in the materials, and fully carried out in the execution. The foreground is occupied to the left by an umbrella, a top-coat, and a bandbox; to the right we have a domestic cat; above the cat, a middle-aged woman with spectacles, who is greeting a couple from the city. English people of the useful class here represented, are seldom remarkable either for grace or grandeur of personal demeanour, but they are not always uncomfortably embarrassed with parcels, nor is it their invariable custom to stand on one leg. There are moments, let

me assure Mr. Hunt, when even the British shopman or clerk is less inelegant than we see him here, but until he affords more artistic material, etchers are scarcely under an obligation to portray him at all. That stiff Sunday hat, though the shine upon it is rendered with praiseworthy accuracy, is a very unmanageable object, and cannot easily be connected with anything else by visible artistic relations. Mr. Hunt's principle of composition appears to be to get all the hands together in one spot, and as many feet as possible in another. The gentleman has lifted his right leg to rub it against his left: this elevates the right foot, and the whole of his wife's boot is carefully drawn immediately beneath it. There is not a free etched line anywhere, but the most laborious little hatchings are thrown in with an absolute regardlessness of toil. Work of this kind is not a crime, but it is a mistake.

CHAPTER XI.

COPE, HORSLEY, HOOK.

UNTIL the plate of the "Life School, Royal Academy," was exhibited by Mr. Cope, in 1867, the position he held as an etcher was in the first rank of the contemporary English school, but not above our insular art. That plate, however, gives him a higher position still, and he is now to be considered as an etcher who has it in his power, if he chooses to devote the time, to take rank with the true etchers of Europe.

In his earlier manner, the cleverest thing I remember is the old man in the illustration to the Songs of Shakespeare ("Passionate Pilgrim"). That figure was remarkably observant and truthful, and drawn with very unusual precision. There are several etchings by Cope of inferior merit, which I should be sorry to accept the responsibility of approving.

Horsley, also, has published several bad or questionable plates, but he has etched a few really good things, and by adhering to the manner adopted in "The Duenna's Return," may yet leave his mark in the history of the art. His touch is often free and right, and his still-life is usually admirable. When he spoils a plate, which he has done occasionally, it is from over-work in tiresome hatching. I should be happy to see him etch more, and always on the scale of "The Duenna's Return."

Hook has done one magnificent plate, "The Egg-gatherer," but he is not a genuine etcher, and the beauty

of his work is always painter-like. The smaller illustration of Shakespeare's Song, "Who is Silvia?" is the nearest approach to etching that I know of his. This is a case like that of Samuel Palmer, where the quality attained is so exquisite, though the method is not that of a true aquafortist, that even the severest critic is disarmed, and can but praise with feeble reserves of disapproval. When a man has reached such decided success as this we hardly like to discourage him by suggestions of alteration in manner, but if Hook could keep his full and rich tonality, whilst adding to it some liberty and emphasis of line, and some bolder use of open line in shading, he might become an etcher of a higher order.

COPE. *The Life School, Royal Academy.*—This is a true etching, and one of the manliest pieces of work ever executed in England. The subject is a remarkably good one, because it composes of itself so naturally, and because the effect of chiaroscuro is so powerful. Of all recent attempts to render the naked figure in pure etching, the model here is one of the most successful,—it is frank and genuine etcher's work; the reader is especially invited to notice the way in which the reflected lights are reserved on the muscles of the back, and the firm shading over them. The figures of the students are very true and various in attitude. Much of the power of this etching is due to the fearless use of the pure etched line, which is often left to itself, as for instance on the floor and screen, and when crossed by hatchings, as in the curtain, and dark shade above the reflectors, never interrupted uselessly, but for the simple purpose of obtaining necessary darks. In vulgar English etching the frank line is avoided or hatched to death, because the artists are afraid of it. I am especially happy to be able to give a copy of the etching itself—its publication here ought to have a beneficial influence, at least on the younger members of our school.

The Spring Flood (one of the twelve plates published by Mr. Cundall, in 1865).—It is not so good as the "Life School." A woman is carrying a little girl across a stream. The water-surface is rendered with some vigour and truth, but the figures, and foliage, and sky, have some of the worst defects which are common to modern English and German work. This is not really etching so much as an attempt to translate a picture in aquafortis; whether the picture was ever painted or not is of no consequence. Setting aside technical considerations there is an obvious exaggeration of perspective in the girl's legs, and the attitudes, both of mother and child, are awkward and uncomfortable.

Winter Song.—This is a fair example of the better sort of English work. It is not yet good etching, because there is little freedom of line, but the shading is in its way honest, though it would have gained by greater simplicity and openness. Mr. Cope has produced other etchings of this class which it is not necessary to criticise specially. He has carried the kind of execution which has been chiefly aimed at by the Etching Club as far as any of its members.

HORSLEY. *The Duenna's Return* (in Mr. Cundall's series).—A duenna is coming back from a walk and finds her charge talking with a young gentleman at the window. This is a much nearer approach to true etching than is usual in this country. There is considerable freedom of hand, and the value of local colour as light and dark appears to be fully appreciated. The passage of light in the small panes above the door is very beautifully given. The plate is signed, J. C. Horsley, 1864, and is decidedly the best work of the artist known to me.

The Deserted Village (plate 61).—The lower of the two etchings on this plate, representing a spindle with an arm-chair near an open window, is one of the most brilliant bits of still life I know in modern etching.

C. W. COPE, R.A.

Interior of a Weaver's Cottage ("Deserted Village," plate 29).—The artistic motive of this little subject is *intricacy*, which, illustrated in other ways, is a favourite motive of Whistler's. There is a want of distinction in lights and darks under the loom about the man's legs; but, with that drawback, this is one of the cleverest little etchings in the volume.

HOOK. *Gathering Eggs from the Cliff.*—I believe that etching can go no farther than this in the imitation of the effects produced in modern painting. This plate so entirely expresses Mr. Hook's manner on canvas that it is not an exaggeration to say that we may see in it the rich copal glazes and the skilful dry touching, of which, as a painter, he is such an accomplished master. This is less an etching than a translation of oil colour; but, in its own way, it is skilful beyond praise. The scene is the front of a rocky cliff and a wide expanse of sea with a high horizon. One boy is letting down another by a rope from a ledge of rock, and a sea-gull is flying within a yard or two of the robber. Other sea-gulls are flying over the sea, and there is a line of white cloud on the horizon. The local colour is everywhere so full that even the grey on the near gull's back is carefully rendered, and scarcely a touch of pure white is admitted anywhere except in the distant clouds, and in the foam that breaks amongst the rocks. Both cliff and sea are, I will not say etched, but *painted* with all the artist's habitual wealth of colour, and it needs but little imagination to supply the very hues themselves.

The Fisherman's Good-night.—A fisherman is parting from his wife and child, who are sitting on a high sea-wall to which a strong ladder is bound firmly. The man is just descending the ladder, and his right leg is straight whilst his left knee rests upon the wall. The conception of this etching is almost as painter-like as that of the one just criticised, but it is not so successful in

execution because there are obvious failures in tonality. The two legs are one undistinguishable blot; and the side of the ladder, the man's waistcoat, and the cliff behind him, are all as nearly as possible of one tone. It is quite curious how these superfine modern English etchers dread the frankness of a clear line. If Rembrandt had had to etch that ladder, and that pair of trousers, he would have shaded them with honest open strokes, presenting, it is true, no appearance of paint, but far more explanatory of the thing. And even when a great etcher is not very explanatory—as will sometimes happen when the nature of material is half lost in undistinguishable shade—he will throw his lines across it without trying to soften them into the semblance of water-colour washes. In this fisherman and ladder ten strokes are given where two were necessary, and after all the subject is so little explained that you cannot distinguish one leg from the other.

CHAPTER XII.

CRESWICK, REDGRAVE, RIDLEY.

CRESWICK is a very beautiful etcher, as engravers understand etching, but his work has very little connexion with the art which is the subject of this book. Creswick's workmanship is delicate and refined in the extreme, and his oppositions of tone are usually just, but he has no independent and original interpretation. The craft that he has learned, and he *has* learned it, has been taught him by the engravers, not perhaps in direct personal counsel, but by an influence fully received, whether consciously or unconsciously. If he has a bit of pasture-ground to etch, or a piece of foliage, you are sure to find the very touches with which professional engravers are accustomed to do these things. Some of Creswick's vignettes are good enough as engraver's work, to be inserted in very carefully illustrated books; one or two of them might be published in Rogers, without giving any unpleasant shock to eyes just fresh from the marvellous handicraft of Goodall. Considered in this independent way, without reference to the art of etching as it was understood by Rembrandt and the true etchers, the work of Creswick is of remarkable excellence; but here, as in so many other cases, we have to make the reservation, that, however pretty and delicate it may be, this is not the kind of work which an etcher ought to aim at or care for. It is so very pretty that, if issued separately from the work of other men, it

is probable that it would even be popular; but its popularity would do no good to the work of real etchers. The fact is, that etching of this kind is already quite popular enough—there is much of it in modern landscape-engraving—and although the public hates true etching, it accepts this without any audible complaint; nay, it does not even know that such work is etching at all, so pleasant is it to look upon, but rather inclines to the belief that it is graven work, the doing of which is a mystery.

The vignette by Mr. Redgrave, "Barbara," is given here as an illustration of the most marked tendency of English etching. It will be observed that this is not engraver's work, but neither, on the other hand, is it free and sensitive etching, and there is in it a sort of finish, for the sake of finish, which is foreign to the real sentiment of the art. It is, however, one of the best things of its class done in our school, and Mr. Redgrave himself has done many things which are much inferior to it, and which it is needless to criticise. What ruined those plates was plethora of labour and want of selection; but Mr. Redgrave exhibited a plate in the Royal Academy, 1867, which, though somewhat too violent in oppositions, has much of the true spirit of etching. Nothing proves the great difficulty of etching more than such cases as this. Mr. Redgrave is a painter of long experience and confirmed manual skill, but when he transfers this experience and this skill to work done with the needle, he too often kills it by doing too much. However, when an etcher is vigorous enough to be making evident progress at the age of sixty-three, he may yet find his expression.

Mr. Ridley is a true etcher of the school of Whistler, but he has little delicacy and no power of composition. His work is better, however, with all its simplicity, than that prevalent in the Etching Club. It is never exquisite, but then on the other hand it is never superfine, and is hopeful enough; because, if by study Mr. Ridley can

R. REDGRAVE, A.R.A.

add delicacy to his honesty, or beauty to his strength—or even if he never aims at beauty, if his expression of picturesque intricacy should come to be more subtle and refined—he is in a fair way of becoming a considerable aquafortist. So far as he has hitherto gone he is on the right track, but in his praiseworthy rebellion against the faults of the superfine school he is temporarily primitive in method, and seems, at present, to have little conception of the resources of the art.

CRESWICK. *A Roughish Road by the Loch-side.*—On the rough bridle roads which skirt those shores of the highland lochs which are little frequented by tourists, there are innumerable subjects far more beautiful and interesting than this. It is always, however, a delightful moment when we come at last, on horseback or on foot, to any place where the road is within six feet of the water, and it is a point of sympathy between Mr. Creswick and his present critic, that the artist has felt the charm of getting down to the very lake itself, even at a spot where the scenery is simple and common-place. Creswick is seldom a powerful landscape-painter, but he is always charming, and this little group of trees and low irregular wall and little glimpse of smooth water have a certain sweetness of their own.

The Deserted Village (plate 2).—A water-mill with a church-tower to the left. In small vignettes of this kind the object is usually an excessive delicacy of treatment which may easily pass into effeminacy. The foliage here is very graceful and light, but it is not masculine work.

The Deserted Village (plate 19).—A broad river with a bridge across it and castle on an eminence to the left, which is connected by the bridge with a town on the other shore. This river flows into a vast dark lake which is interrupted only by the towers of the castle. Beyond the lake rises an alp of immense altitude girdled

by a rain-storm, above which its snows [illegible] serene air. This is one of the most perfect [illegible] little vignettes of Creswick, and as a piece of engraving will bear a comparison with much professional work.

The Deserted Village (plate 34).—The central vignette on this plate. The subject is a rustic bridge over a small river in which some cows are standing; beyond the bridge is a clump of magnificent elms, and there is a church-tower in the remote distance. The sweetness and beauty of this little composition will be appreciated, I suppose, by every one. The workmanship is very perfect of its kind, and, after the reserves which have been made above, may be praised very heartily.

REDGRAVE. *Barbara* (a vignette in the Songs of Shakespeare, given herewith).—In the fine early impressions, the black shade behind the figure is richer than in this copy. The figure is very delicately finished, but is somewhat difficult to print, and there will be a difference of quality in the impressions. However, the reader will observe the truly English conscientiousness of the work.

Corpse discovered in a Wood.—The body, probably, of a murdered man, is found lying on its back in a little hollow, by a gentleman walking that way. This is one of the best of Redgrave's very laborious plates. He would have painted the same subject better.

Silver Thames.—Exhibited in the Academy, 1867. A view on the Thames, very expressive of the character of its scenery. Alternate gleams and cloud shadows give variety to the lighting. The oppositions between the shaded and the lighted trees, though by no means too strong for a statement of that isolated natural fact, are, nevertheless, too strong relatively to other things in the plate. For example, the shaded side of the punt, though quite black, is not and cannot be black enough relatively to the black distance, and the reflection of the

Bradley sculp.

DURHAM.

trees in the water is even lighter than the trees reflected. The clouds are boldly put in, but are somewhat heavy and wanting in form. On the whole, however, the plate is really an etching, though not yet of first-rate quality, and real etchings are very rare.

RIDLEY. *North Dock.* — Artists are always teaching us to see something interesting in what we believed to be without interest. Here is a chimney with a little building near it as ugly as any in Lancashire, and yet it must be good material, for it seems right in its place. The masts of the shipping, though rudely sketched, give the effect of intricacy. There is not much *composition* in the plate, but the manual work is simple and free.

Draham Harbour.—Rather better than the preceding. A true etching in a simple manner; the etched line is relied upon everywhere.

Durham. — The scenery of the river-shore here is quite remarkable for its ugliness, but the etching is on the whole a good one, in spite of foul chimneys. Mr. Ridley's honest objection to anything but the plain line sometimes leads him to an unnecessary asceticism. The water and sky are here exactly of the same vacant white, whereas the water would have benefited greatly by a little delicate tinting in dry-point. A reflection is always darker than the thing reflected, except when there is a thin stratum of mist on the water-surface.

CHAPTER XI

TAYLER, LANDSEER, &c.

FREDERICK TAYLER has carried the English manner as far as any of his contemporaries. There is especially one etching of his, in the "Songs of Shakespeare," given in this volume, which has not, in that kind of work, been surpassed. But Frederick Tayler has two distinct manners as an etcher: the highly-finished modern way, depending greatly on *crevés*,* of various depth, and on dry-point whose bur is removed; and another manner, resembling the work of a draughtsman on wood, in which the peculiar powers of etching are abandoned. An example of each is criticised below. I should say, judging from Mr. Tayler's skilful and rapid manner in water-colour sketching, that he might become an unusually clever etcher if he studied the genuine art.

I should have been glad to speak of Landseer's etchings in this place, but do not happen to have any of them by me. I remember them, however, sufficiently well to say generally, that they are not true etchings, but only skilful sketches on copper. Local colour is generally omitted, which, in etching, is an unpardonable sin, and the especial qualities of the art do not seem to be cared for or understood. Of course, as Landseer is an accom-

* To save the reader the trouble of referring to the book on Processes, I may say here, that the *crevé* (I know no English equivalent for the word) is a hatching, so close, that the separation of the lines *crèvent* (give way, die, disappear) in the biting. *Crevés* are of various depth, according to the length of the biting.

FRED. TAYLER

plished draughtsman (of animals), a sketch by him on copper has always the same artistic value as a sketch by him on paper; but an etching should go beyond that, and have qualities of its own, as etching, not attainable with lead-pencil or pen and ink.

Exactly the same criticism applies to the etchings of Ansdell. He is a very accomplished artist, and when he does not think about etching at all, but simply sketches as he would with a finely-pointed pen, he does work of a certain value, which value depends on his knowledge of animals, and not on his knowledge of etching, in which he does not appear to be particularly interested. When he tries to go farther than this, he fares worse, because, in attempting what is popularly called "finish," he laboriously imitates the errors of his contemporaries. I should place a very high value on some of his simplest etchings, but not as achievements in the craft of the aquafortist.

Mr. Knight has not been so industrious a contributor to the works of the Etching Club, as some other members. The peculiarities of his manner are sufficiently indicated below, in the criticisms of two of his plates.

FREDERICK TAYLER. *The Forester's Song.*—A copy of this etching is given opposite. Fine early impressions of it are superior to later ones, chiefly in the dark velvet costume of the central figure. From beginning to end this etching proves an entire mastery of the modern system of work. The use of close hatching, by which tints of various depths are acquired at the sacrifice of line, has never been carried farther; and if the reader cares to study a good representative specimen of what English painters understand by etching, I could not suggest a better.

A Day's Hunting in the Fens (in Mr. Cundall's series).—A gentleman out hunting is dragging his horse out of a dyke. This etching has none of the executive finish

of the preceding one, and belongs to a different class. It is not superior in quality to much modern drawing on wood, nor is there any work in it which would entirely defeat a first-rate modern wood-engraver. Mr. Tayler has not, in this plate, availed himself of the technical superiorities of etching.

ANSDELL. *Sleepest or Wakest thou, Jolly Shepherd?*—This is not one of the best of Ansdell's plates, but it was the best that I could obtain for this book; it is, however, in some respects, richer as an etching than those which better display his qualities as a draughtsman. The most delicate piece of drawing here is the sheep in the corn, seen in profile; the corn itself is rather careless and unmeaning.

The Sentinel.—This magnificent study of a stag will be found in the etchings published for the Art Union of London. Considered specially as etching, it may rank with such German work as that of Gauermann, but the draughtsmanship is so intelligent as to surpass even the best designs of Gauermann; and I suppose no man living could have drawn such a stag better, unless it be Edwin Landseer. In this kind of etching there is not much technical superiority, because the technical difficulties of the art are scarcely contended against; but if we consider the work simply as a drawing, we must admit that it is very highly accomplished. The vivacity and precision in the stag's eye and ears and nostril, and the true setting of the noble head, prove thorough knowledge of the animal. However far this may fall short of great etching, there is no technical failure, and the plate shows none of those painful signs of mistaken and wasted labour so frequent in modern work.

Fellow-commoners.—Donkeys and sheep on a common. This is the eighteenth plate in those published for the Art Union of London. The drawing of the asses and sheep is not quite so brilliant as that of the stag just criticised,

JOHN P. KNIGHT, A.R.A.

with the exception, perhaps, of the foal which is lying down. As in the previous subject, the artist has not attempted full tonality, and the landscape is exceedingly slight.

The Park.—In this instance, Mr. Ansdell has abandoned his usual simplicity of purpose, and the consequence has been a failure. The lighting is unsatisfactory, in some points even contradictory, and the landscape unmeaning. If the reader will look at this near trunk and the foliage above it, and then turn to any tree of equal importance in an etching by Haden, he will at once see how very unobservant is this work of Ansdell's. Either he cannot draw trees, or he sees them without enthusiasm; if he looked at stag's horns in that way, he would not paint them as he does. All through this etching there is quite a German prettiness; and though the effect was intended to be forcible, the result is an impression of weakness.

KNIGHT. *The Peasant and the Forest.*—One of the plates in a volume called "Etched Thoughts," published in 1844. It may be noticed as a special variety of mistaken work. The touches are innumerable, but they explain nothing; the labour has been unsparing, but it has led to nothing. The man's gaiter, the bark of the tree and its section, are all executed in the same manner; there has been no selection, and the consequence is confusion.

Drinking Song.—The reader may judge for himself of this etching, which is much better than the one mentioned above; it still retains, however, an unfortunate sameness of manner. We have still the curious dread of the frank etched line, which marks and mars nearly all English work. Notwithstanding this, however, I have a liking for the plate, and am glad to have it here for the artistic unity of its composition and the masterly drawing of the heads. It commemorates a picturesque old custom, now fallen into disuse in England, though still kept up on the Continent.

CHAPTER XIV.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE ENGLISH CLUB.

The "Deserted Village" of Oliver Goldsmith, illustrated by the Etching Club. London, 1841.

THIS volume contains eighty small etchings, of which the predominating character is evidently derived from the delicate little engraver's vignettes which were common in the days of the annuals. Amongst these small etchings many are very pretty; I use the word *pretty* deliberately, as the one best suited to the case. There is no strong or immortal work in the volume, but it is often interesting, and even charming, with a graceful drawing-room sentiment. It is curious how this sentiment pervades the work of all the contributors; they never attempt anything beyond it, but rarely fall short of it.

Etched Thoughts. 1844.—The contributors have here emerged from the minute delicacy of the vignette, and, in attempting work of a somewhat more manly character, have for the most part failed. This series is much inferior to the preceding, and is, on the whole, the worst publication of the Club. Its most common defects are want of selection, and a technical weakness, reminding us of the work of school-girls. One or two plates of Creswick are charming, but the general level of the book is very low.

Gray's Elegy. 1847.—Better than the preceding; the plates are more careful, or better chosen. There is still,

however, a spirit in the work, much more like the spirit of a modern exhibition than the grandeur of the noble etchers.

Milton's L'Allegro. 1849.—The Club here reaches the level of an average Academy Exhibition, of which the book strongly reminds us. The best plate is "The Sunrise," by Creswick, illustrating the line

"By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green."

This is the most beautiful etching of its class that I have seen. It is pure poetry.

The Songs of Shakespeare. 1852.—A very beautiful publication, without any of those striking failures which injured most of the others. Every contributor has done his best, and the results of former practice are concentrated in each plate. It is enough to reconcile us to those preliminary failures, that they have led to this success.

Etchings for the Art Union of London. 1857.—A set of thirty etchings, which would have gained in apparent value by the rejection of a dozen or fifteen, which it is not necessary to particularize. It is one of the misfortunes of the *Club system* of publication, that rejection is almost impossible. A periodical publication of etchings, edited by some competent and severe critic, would avoid this difficulty. I have no doubt that the more critical members of the Club will quite agree with me that many plates have been issued which it would have been wiser, if it had been possible, to suppress. There are several very good things in this book, but they are rather lost in the mass.

A Selection of Etchings by the Etching Club, published by Cundall. 1865.—Twelve plates on a larger scale than is usual in England. On the whole, this is the best work the Club has issued. The Haden and Hook are both exceedingly fine; the "Summer Woods," by Redgrave, is a charming piece of sylvan scenery; the "Duenna's Return" is Horsley's best etching; the "Herdsman," by

Samuel Palmer, is one of his three noblest works, the Creswick is at least as good as Creswick's aver which is saying a great deal.

The misfortune of the English school has been that it has endeavoured to please an uneducated public, and to do this has aimed at making etching *pretty*. Hence, our English etchers have fallen into a manner, the worst fault of which is, that it is superfine, that it abandons the true aims of great artists for a drawing-room success. But we owe great thanks to the members of the Club, for their endeavour to keep the art alive; and though, except in one or two instances, they have not themselves produced anything which, as etching, is likely to be beneficial as an example to future students, they have founded an association, and begun a work which we may well desire to see extended and perpetuated. That the Etching Club may continue its labours prosperously, and become the centre of a more powerful revival, is a wish perfectly compatible with serious criticism of what it has already done; and if the last few pages of this book have not been so wholly laudatory as the writer himself could have desired, it is because he has applied the highest known standards. From a lower point of view—from that point of view where prettiness is a quality to be admired—a criticism might be written in terms of praise; but it may be doubted whether criticism of that kind would be more acceptable to any true artist than mine is. I pay every etcher the compliment of a manly sincerity, if I pay him no other, and every reader knows it. Half the authority of a critic depends on the power of telling rude truth, even to his most respected contemporaries.

ETCHING AND ETCHERS.

BOOK III.

THE FRENCH SCHOOL.

CHAPTER I.

PRESENT STATE OF THE ART IN FRANCE.

WE have just seen that the English Etching Club has published works at irregular intervals, of various character, but for the most part illustrations of poems. The action of the Club on the public mind has therefore been occasional and intermittent, and long intervals have occurred during which no publication has been made, so that the public has had time to forget the existence of the art. With a view to keep up an interest in etching, the French Club determined to make its publication periodical.

The French Etching Club, called the *Société des Aquafortistes*, was originally formed at a meeting of artists, held on the 31st of May, 1862. Messrs. Cadart and Chevalier were appointed its publishers and managers; and the seat of the society was fixed at their publishing-house in the Rue de Richelieu. A series of fundamental rules, which I have before me, was agreed upon. Any artist who may wish to become a member of the Club can send a trial-plate, which is exhibited at a meeting of the members. If the plate is accepted, the artist is elected, and copies of his reception-etching are placed in the Imperial Library. The Club on its formation pledged itself to publish five etchings at the end of each month, beginning with the 1st of September, 1862. The etchings thus form a sort of monthly magazine, containing five articles by different

contributors; and, indeed, their publication differs from *Fraser* or *Macmillan* only in this, that the thoughts which it gives to the world are expressed with the etching needle instead of the pen. The Club decides at its meetings when its members are to be called upon to contribute etchings. These meetings are held every month, and the publishers account to the Club for their management of its pecuniary concerns. A jury, composed of five members, changed every month, accepts or rejects plates. Every member, except honorary ones, is obliged to be a subscriber to the publication of the Club; he is also obliged to attend one meeting a year. The price of the annual subscription is fifty francs, for which subscribers receive sixty plates. Twenty-five copies, proofs before letters, are printed on *papier de Hollande*, and sold at double the ordinary price. The plates of the ordinary edition are also sold separately at a franc and a half each.

The outward appearance of the publication is not so luxurious as that of the works of our own Club. The monthly number consists of five plates, of various dimensions, but always printed on a stout rough paper measuring 21 inches by 14½ inches. The appearance of prettiness is avoided, and the style of publication is serious and important; the paper is sufficiently large to admit an etching as large as the Callot in this volume. When smaller plates are issued, as for instance the Appian given herewith, two are printed on the same sheet; but the general practice of the members is to etch what we should consider large plates.

These details may seem of little consequence, but they are in reality important, because they influence the entire development of a school. The mere fact of the size of the sheet of paper induces men to aim at a certain manner of work, and gradually, as in the case of contributors to literary periodicals, habits are acquired in unison with the whole nature of the publication. It

has been observed that a man who writes for two periodicals changes his style instinctively so as to suit each periodical—it never occurs to a man to write for the *Saturday Review* as he would write for the *Times*: and so the members of this French Etching Club, having before their eyes the great sheet of rough white paper, would naturally think of the kind of work which would fill it most effectually. Hence it has come to pass that whilst the members of the English Club, with their delicate India paper and gilt edges, and luxuriously printed text of chosen verse, have tried always to make their work *pretty;* so the Frenchmen, with their great plain sheet of white paper, have tried to make their work powerful. Each has aimed at an especial success, and, as always happens in the Fine Arts, the majority in each instance have failed. The English fail in a girlish feebleness, the French in pretentious impudence. Of these two kinds of failure the English is morally preferable, for it is at least modest, whereas the French is outrageous in its self-conceit; but if we set aside this moral aspect of the matter, and consider only the artistic question, we must admit that the French etcher, who scrawls furiously, has some of the fundamental ideas about etching which are too often lost sight of in London. He sees that etching is an art which requires decision, speed, emphasis, comprehensiveness, passion; and he strives, though impotently and vainly, to reach these qualities, to exercise these powers.

And here it is necessary to say something which may be rather unpleasant to our friends across the Channel, but which it would be wrong to conceal or dissimulate. The works of the French Etching Club are not, on the whole, better than our own, or than those of the German Radirverein: their distinguishing merit is not to have succeeded, but to have stumbled and fallen in the mire with their faces turned Zion-ward. Hence they may be regarded with some tenderness by the critic; but this

consideration is not enough to make them acceptable to the collector. The works of the French Etching Club are not usually such as any true judge would admit into his collection; very many of them are the productions of amateurs who cannot draw, or of artists who, though they may be able to draw and paint, have had little or no practice in etching on metal, and do not seem to be aware of the exigencies or capabilities of the art. A lax indulgence seems to preside at the editing of the periodical issue of etchings to which the members of the Club contribute. Many plates have been admitted which no language can condemn strongly enough; displays of an incompetence so ludicrous that their publication seems more than an imprudence, for it is an impertinence. Then there is a tiresome mass of mediocrity, not laughably bad, and certainly not cheering to the mind by the display of any pleasant facility or power, but dull and dry stupidities which it was a waste of time to commit to the copper, and a waste of paper to circulate. The impression conveyed by so much bad or mediocre work has been very unfortunate for the Club. The few good etchers who contribute to it have suffered the usual disagreeable consequences of being seen in bad company, and subscribers do not seem to be aware that they are in possession by this time of a little collection of good things if they would throw the bad ones away. A little time back I found that the accumulations of the four years during which the *Société des Aquafortistes* has regularly issued its five etchings monthly, were becoming an incumbrance; so the idea struck me that it might be well to winnow the mass. The collection consisted of two hundred and forty plates, which by the winnowing process were reduced to about one quarter of that number, the rest being destroyed without regret. On the average a subscriber to this publication may count upon finding one plate worth keeping per month; and as the terms of subscription are low—two pounds

a year—it follows that he would pay about four shillings for the selected plate, which is not too much. Considered in this way, it is worth while to be a subscriber; but a subscriber who hoped to receive a large proportion of good things would be liable to disappointment.

The attitude of the French public with reference to etching is, like that of our own, one of simple indifference. By great personal activity M. Cadart procured subscribers to the Club, but the mass of the public is not interested in the art; and if modern etchings are to be sold at all in France, the price must be very moderate. There has been, however, a very cordial unanimity in the French press in favour, not of the actual achievements of the Club, but of its good purpose—the revival of a noble and almost forgotten art. M. Cadart has devoted great personal exertion to the revival; and though as a merchant he must have looked to the object of trade, which is profit, there is no doubt that he became sincerely inoculated with that enthusiasm which takes possession of all who come to understand and appreciate etching. He crossed the Atlantic, and preached the new doctrine publicly in the cities of the United States, where he inaugurated etching clubs, which are now in activity. After several years of incessant labour he found himself entirely ruined, and the partners (Cadart and Luquet) separated, after paying honourably twenty shillings in the pound. But so strong was the conviction amongst artists in favour of M. Cadart's probity, that they determined to re-establish him, and advanced by subscription the necessary funds, so that he might still keep up a publishing-house devoted to the speciality of etching. These details are given here because they are interesting facts in the history of the art. M. Cadart's name deserves to be handed down to posterity as that of the first publisher who made etching his particular business, and devoted time and means to its popularisation. The name of

M. Delâtre, the printer, deserves also to be commemorated here, as that of the first printer who ever devoted himself exclusively to the printing of etchings. The names of Cadart and Delâtre are closely interwoven with the history of the revival of etching in France, and will be long remembered by all who in that country care about it.

There is a point of difference between the condition of etching in the two countries which is worth noticing. A few commissions for etchings have been given in France, chiefly, it is true, to Jacquemart, whose plates, though exquisite, are almost outside of the kind of work which a painter can do with the point, and are rather a new kind of professional engraving; and to the illustrators of Bida's Bible, who are copyists, since they copy the designs of Bida. Méryon and Lalanne have, however, also received commissions, and so have one or two other artists; in short, the time has come when it is not thought altogether out of the question to pay something for an etched plate. We have not yet reached this point in England, except for comic illustrations, and in these cases the etching is bought for the comedy and not for the art.

CHAPTER II.

CLAUDE.

THE position of Claude as a landscape-painter may be briefly defined, before we consider him as an etcher. He was the first artist who made landscapes thoroughly charming by means of artistic and harmonious composition and beautiful effects of light. By these means he captivated the connoisseurs of his time, and became the father of modern landscape. But he had an essentially classical mind, and therefore could not enjoy pure and wild nature like Englishmen and Americans of the present day, and his study of nature was never very deep or passionate. By long labour and on account of his artistic aim—for he thought more about art than about facts—he came to possess on some points a very extraordinary technical skill; and this skill, in combination with his pretty composition and agreeable effects, has sufficed, and will probably always suffice, to maintain his reputation. The modern study of nature has proved that Claude was often scientifically weak, but it has not dethroned him as an artist; and although many of us can see that he was ignorant of much that has since been added to the common stock of information, we cannot practically beat him on his own ground.

His superiority as an etcher is chiefly a technical superiority; he could lay a shade more delicately, and with more perfect gradation, than any other etcher of land-

scape, he could reach rare effects of transparency, and there is an ineffable tenderness in his handling. These are his chief claims to our consideration, and he is so strong on these points that such accomplished moderns as Haden and Samuel Palmer have a great reverence for his name. Add to these qualities a certain freedom and spirit in his line, which served him well in near masses of foliage, and a singularly perfect tonality in one or two remarkable plates, and you have the grounds of his immortality as an etcher. He was great in this sense, but not great in range of intellectual perception, and his genius at the best is somewhat feminine. He has left a few unimportant and weak etchings, but he has also left half-a-dozen masterpieces, which the severest criticism must respect. One merit of his is not common in his modern successors—the extreme modesty of his style; no etcher was ever less anxious to produce an impression of cleverness, and his only object seems to have been the simple rendering of his ideas. He sincerely loved beauty and grace, and tried innocently for these till his touch became gentler than that of a child's fingers, yet so accomplished that the stubborn copper was caressed, as it were, into a willing obedience.

Le Bouvier: second state. (Dumesnil, 1, 13, 8.)—A herdsman is seated near a pool of water which his cows are crossing. Beyond the pool is a magnificent group of trees. To the left of these trees are the remains of a temple, and, above the herdsman, a distance with hills. For technical quality of a certain delicate kind this is the finest landscape-etching in the world. Its transparency and gradation have never been surpassed. The most wonderful passages are in the great masses of foliage which have been, as it were, tenderly painted and glazed with the point. The composition is very beautiful; and though the study of nature is less accurate than in some modern work, there is a noble movement in the trees which

accurate draughtsmen often miss, and which an etcher, of all artists, is bound to interpret and preserve.

Le Soleil couchant: second state. (Dumesnil, 1, 19, 15.)—A seaport at sunset. To the left an arch of triumph in shadow, and trees; then a round tower, some battlements, and a square tower; after which two ships, and a distance of hilly coast. To the right is another tower, near which is the setting sun.

This etching is remarkable for the inexpressible tenderness of its sky. When heretics and unbelievers say that skies cannot be done in etching, it is always convenient to answer them with a reference to this plate; but the truth is that although this sky is marvellously tender, and in this respect undoubtedly the finest ever etched, the cloud-forms are so simple and so little defined that Claude's success in this instance has not solved more than one of the great sky-problems.

Le Troupeau en marche par un Temps d'Orage. (Dumesnil, 1, 22, 18.)—Easily recognised by the massive fragment of a ruined temple to the left. The temple has Corinthian columns, of which three only are visible. A flock of cattle and goats is driven by a man and a dog in the direction of the temple. In the middle distance to the right is a rising ground with a castle on it. Between the castle and the temple is a lake with a village on its shore, and beyond the lake, in the extreme distance, are mountains. The reader is recommended to study more particularly the third state.

Claude seems to have had a sensitive and delicate nature, more capable of enjoying the softly gradated sky of a fine afternoon than the grandeur of gathering storm. The sky here is curiously feeble and ineffectual, but the etching is one of Claude's best, and especially deserves to be studied for the piece of ruined temple, which is etched more firmly and substantially than any other piece of architecture by him.

La Danse villageoise. (Dumesnil, 1, 28, 24.)—What

follows refers to the first state only. The subject is generally exceedingly pale, and Claude has here made an experiment in the direction of mezzotint, by slightly roughening the surface of his copper to obtain a tinted distance. The foliage is exceedingly graceful, and, though the plate is obviously an experiment, and an unsuccessful one, it is by no means the least interesting of the series.

Scène de Brigands. (Dumesnil, 1, 16, 12.)—There is a mass of trees to the left, at the foot of which are dock-leaves. Towards the bottom of the trunk these trees are crossed by a palm-tree, and under the palm-tree a man is attacked by brigands. The distance is mountainous, and the middle distance wooded. The point of interest here is the contrast between the firmness and brilliancy of definition in the palm-leaves and other foreground foliage, and the tender quality of work in the distance and sky.

Berger et Bergère conversant. (Dumesnil, 1, 25, 21.)—Not so rich in tone as some other etchings of Claude, but free and grand in manner. The trees to the right have a stately grace, and there is an extreme elegance in the tree that divides the composition. There are some rolling clouds, and there is little repose in the unquiet lines of the foreground; but the shepherd and shepherdess can have their talk without paying much heed to so finely artistic a consideration.

La Danse sous les Arbres: second state. (Dumesnil, 1, 14, 10.)—Centre figure a woman with short petticoat; above her a group of trees. To the left a woman with tambourine, and four villagers seated on the trunk of a fallen tree. Foliage to the right and left of the subject, and between the trees openings of hilly distance. This plate is remarkable only for the manual freedom in the foliage.

CHAPTER III.

CALLOT AND BOISSIEU.

IT has already happened to me several times in the course of this volume, to mention artists when they enjoy great reputations, even though I may have little personal sympathy with their work. There is always, however, something to interest us in the criticism of any artist, whether we like him or not, for there is always a lesson to be learned. I believe that no true etcher will get much good by the study of Callot, because his manner was usually far more that of an engraver than a genuine etcher; but he was a man of great genius and wit, and when he chose to use the point like a true etcher he could do so very effectually. The bits of true etching occur rarely, and only in parts of his works; the mass of what he did is spoiled, as etching, by reminiscences and imitations of the burin. When the reader has studied a few of the genuine etchers, he will at once see for himself in what failure of this kind consists, and even so great a reputation as that of Callot will have little power to disturb the tranquillity of his judgment. These great reputations are so often due to *something else* than technical quality or the faculties which lead to high technical accomplishment, that it is never any reason to conclude that an artist is to be recommended as a model for imitation merely because he is famous.

Boissieu is much more dangerous than Callot, on account of his uncommon skill in the very things that

a young etcher is anxious to acquire. He could lay his tones with as near an approach to absolute certainty as any etcher need hope for; and, in short, he was such a clever fellow that he could do with his hands whatsoever his mind imagined. But all this cleverness, though maintained by inexhaustible patience and untiring industry, led only to delicate renderings of distant tones, and a vulgarly deceptive imitation of nearer objects. Boissieu could etch a tub till it looked as if it had been photographed, and he could etch a distant hill till it looked as soft and grey as a hill in an old picture; but both tub and distance were always irremediably uninteresting as fine art. Boissieu was an extraordinary master of vulgar imitation, in which no etcher ever surpassed him; and he proved at least this, that there exists in etching a fund of imitative resource which may be drawn upon to an extent little dreamed of by people whose one idea about art is, that it is the imitative copyism of objects, and who hate etching because it is too interpretative for their taste. We shall come later to an imitator of a far higher order, Jules Jacquemart; but even Boissieu had settled the question as to whether etching, in skilled hands, could, or could not, imitate things accurately.

CALLOT. *La Tour de Nesle.*—The Tour de Nesle is to the right, near the middle of the composition. Beyond it are the towers of Notre-Dame in the distance, the Pont Neuf, and several church steeples, besides blocks of houses. The foreground is animated by a variety of figures, some in boats, some on horseback, others on foot.

I am fortunate in being able to give an impression of this etching from the original copper, which is in the possession of M. Arsène Houssaye, and still in fair condition. It may be taken as favourably representative of the artist. The distant view of Paris is beautiful, and the various distances are carefully pre-

served. There is some bad perspective, as in the tower itself, where the rings of masonry are wrong. A set of circles, seen in perspective, the circles being at various elevations above the spectator, offers just one of those little perspective problems which puzzle an artist who is not quite sure of himself. The figures have the usual intense vivacity of Callot's men and women,—they are all alive and doing something: this is a power akin to that of Cruikshank, who, by a similar energy in movement, has given life to figures so small that the faces are hardly visible. It is a sort of pantomime that fills this foreground from side to side: every group is amusing, and a child might pass half an hour in inventing histories of the actors. It is obvious, however, that Callot has put too much into his etching. There are two distinct subjects, one on each side the central tower, and each is complete in itself. Whenever a work of art can be *advantageously* cut to pieces, it is a proof of a certain kind of failure.

I need not expatiate on the great historical and topographical interest of this etching: its value, as a record of Paris in Callot's time, is almost inestimable.

The Louvre.—Another view of the Seine, but this time looking down the stream, with the Tour de Nesle to the left, seen from the other side. The water is crowded with high-sterned galleys, with masts and many oars. The sails are furled, the long pennons are powdered with *fleurs de lis.* It seems to be a royal procession by water; the quays are crowded with figures.

This is a good instance of the way Callot used to spoil his etchings, by employing engraver's methods of work. In the buildings to the left the shading, which was at first perpendicular, has been ruined by a set of unmeaning diagonal lines, which produce a very unpleasant reticulation. There is a mechanical rigidity in the building which is contrary to the freedom of etching. The indications of cloud are weak and engraver-like;

they have nothing of the quality of liberal and noble art. The group of buildings just behind the Tour de Nesle is in the highest degree picturesque,—that is, we see that the buildings themselves must have been picturesque; but if they had only been reserved for Méryon, how much they would have gained in the delineation!

BOISSIEU. *Vue du Pont et du Château de Sainte-Colombe, en Dauphiné.*—A battlemented and turreted castle to the right, with a mountain behind it. Under the castle are a mill and landing-stages; then a river with a bridge, and to the left of the bridge a massive tree; to the left of the tree a ruin with arch beneath. In the foreground a landing-place, projecting from a stone pier to wooden supports, and near the landing-place a boat with large rudder,—the boat containing barrels, &c. There are several figures,—two men sitting on tiller, man and woman sitting on end of pier, woman and boy walking with a dog, man fishing, man standing leaning on his stick.

There is considerable artistic craft. The distances are kept well, relatively. The foreground is vigorous, with a tendency to old-fashioned trifling here and there. The reflection of the boat is careful, the work on the boat tending to elaborateness, firm and good in light, but in shadow needlessly black. The form of the mountain, as in all art of that time, is wanting in firmness and knowledge.

Entrée du Village de Lantilly.—A pale, delicate sky, with some indication of cloud, a building to the right with a square mass like a tower, roofed in the low pyramid form so often seen in southern countries. There is a staircase with a low gable. There is a large tree to the left with the trunk partially denuded. The manual delicacy of the work in the sky is very admirable, but the imitative rendering of the tree-trunk is puerile,

though skilful in a high degree. On the whole, this is one of Boissieu's best etchings.

Les Tonneliers (the large print).—Scene, the interior of a wine-cellar. *Personæ*, four men; namely, a cooper striking circles with his hammer, two cellar-men carrying wine in a tub suspended on poles, a third standing and looking at the spectator, holding a pitcher on a barrel.

This etching is mentioned for the marvellous imitative finish in the barrel to the left—not to recommend it for imitation, but as a curious example of what may be accomplished in etching, in that direction, by an artist more skilful than intelligent.

Vue du Passage du Garillano, en Italie.—A pale sky with a few clouds, chiefly to the right. A mountain, a city on a hill in the middle distance, an aqueduct to the right. A river with a ferry-boat; in the boat a carriage and pair, a man on horseback, and several other people. In the foreground, to the left, a horse going to drink at a trough, a man with him, another man, a woman, two children, and a dog. In the right hand corner is a man on horseback, galloping away.

This is a very perfect etching of its kind. The tone is most successfully reached everywhere. Many nobler etchers might be glad of this technical certainty in getting the tone just pale enough and just dark enough. It is a rare accomplishment, even amongst clever men.

CHAPTER IV.

MÉRYON.

WHEN our enlightened century reflects on the ignorances and injustices of the past, it is apt to be well pleased with its own luminous superiority. Albert Durer was wretchedly poor, and John Milton got an instalment of five pounds on the completion of "Paradise Lost," but Mr. Frith and Miss Braddon are paid in thousands. And are not French artists rich and fortunate now? Has not Meissonier just sold a picture for six thousand pounds?

No doubt, on the whole, both artists and writers are better paid in these days than they have ever been before; and although both occupations are more crowded than ever, there is a better chance now than there was formerly for a good workman in either to obtain recognition during his lifetime. But the favour of the public, and the rewards that it brings, do not always find out and encourage the best men; and there has never been an age when an artist of rare and peculiar power was more exposed to the mortification of seeing vulgar work liberally remunerated, and noble work passed in neglect.

The case of Charles Méryon is one of those painful ones which recur in every generation, to prove the fallibility of the popular judgment. Méryon is one of the greatest and most original artists who have appeared in Europe; he is one of the immortals; his name will be

inscribed on the noble roll where Durer and Rembrandt live for ever. A few persons now living know this as well as I do, but these few belong to a small and highly cultivated class, with which the great art public has very little in common. An intelligent writer upon art said, not very long ago, that artists had no occasion to complain of the public, because, if the matter were inquired into, it would be found that every artist had his own public. This is, no doubt, in a certain sense true; every writer and every artist is appreciated by somebody, if only he has some sort of talent and accomplishment; but for an author or an etcher to live by his work he needs more than this little group of friends. Three customers will keep a painter from starving for a year, but no composer of printed matter could live if he had only three readers. An etcher is a composer of printed matter, and he needs a public sufficiently large to remunerate him adequately for his time,—that is, at least two hundred regular buyers. Now, to find two hundred regular buyers, he requires ten times that number of students and admirers; and it is not always easy to excite the serious interest of two thousand people. A public which is not extensive enough to enable its favourite to live by his labour, is for all practical purposes not a public at all; and it is in vain to tell an author that he is unreasonable to wish for more than a hundred readers, or an etcher that he is foolishly anxious for notoriety when he is not satisfied with the approbation of the cultivated few. The suffrage of the cultivated few is very desirable, and there is more intellectual and artistic encouragement in the quiet praise of ten competent persons, than in the applause of multitudes; but the very love of art itself compels an artist to wish for a public not only educated, but numerous; because, without either a numerous public or independent private fortune, he cannot continue to work. Méryon has been sorely tried by public and national

indifference, and in a moment of bitter discouragement he destroyed the most magnificent series of his plates. When we think of the scores of mediocre engravers of all kinds, who, without one ray of imagination, live decently and contentedly by their trade, and then of this rare and sublime genius actually ploughing deep burin lines across his inspired work, because no man regarded it; and when we remember that this took place in Paris, in our enlightened nineteenth century, it makes one doubt whether, after all, we are much better than savages or barbarians. Now that plates can be preserved by steeling, the etchings of a man like Méryon would sell by tens of thousands if the world knew their value; but when such work as this is set before modern society, it is a setting of pearls—&c.

Méryon was born in Paris in 1821, and his father is an Englishman, believed to be still living. Much of the unusual delicacy of perception which distinguishes him as an artist, is attributed by M. Burty to maternal influence. He studied mathematics with much industry and application, and entered in 1837 the naval school of Brest. As a naval officer he visited many remote shores, sailing even round the world, and always employing his leisure hours in sketching everything of interest that came in his way. But, though Méryon loved the sea, and had a fraternal affection for sailors, his health was not robust enough for a life of that kind, and he was obliged to abandon his profession. Being already an intelligent practical amateur, he endeavoured to become an artist; and, with the intention of adopting painting as a profession, took lessons of M. Phellippes, a former pupil of David. As a painter, Méryon did not succeed, probably from anxiety to produce pictures without the necessary technical education. Whilst suffering from disappointment in this ambition, he happened to meet with M. Eugène Bléry, who directed his attention to etching. Méryon studied etching for several months

with M. Bléry, and employed this time fruitfully in the analysis of plates by the elder masters, which he copied as exercises. This preliminary study was followed by excursions in Normandy and a visit to Bourges, a picturesque old city not very far south of the Loire.

Before undertaking the series of original etchings on which his fame will rest, Méryon laboriously employed the art in the translation of other men's work, or in the execution of more or less uncongenial commissions. What developed Méryon was his passionate wish to preserve some adequate memorial of that picturesque old city of Paris which has disappeared before the constructive activity of Haussmann and Louis Napoleon. If old Paris had been likely to remain a generation or two longer, it is possible that we might scarcely have heard of Méryon, because half the quality of his work is due to the intensity of his affection for remains whose destruction he foresaw with the most bitter regret, as a near and irremediable misfortune which he had no power to avert. But if an artist cannot save an old building which he loves, he may at least secure a memorial of it, a memorial better than the fidelity of the photograph, because it expresses not only the beauty of the thing itself, but the pathetic affection of the one human soul that cares for it. It became, then, the object of this artist to make a series of etchings in which the old *tourelles* and quaint streets of Paris should be preserved for future times, and when he undertook this task he had already made himself the most accomplished architectural etcher, not only of this century, but of all centuries; not only of France, but of the world. The opportunity for the exercise of Imperial encouragement was exceptional and splendid; and if the Government had known its duty, Méryon would have been commissioned to do perfectly, and on a far more extensive scale, what he did imperfectly in the face of absolute public indifference, and the stern possibility of starvation. To do the French Government

justice, it knows the value of another extraordinary man, Jules Jacquemart, and employs him precisely on the kind of work for which nature intended him; but it was less necessary to etch the guarded treasures of the Louvre, which are kept in perfect safety, than the habitations of the nation's forefathers, habitations which private interest or public order is levelling day by day.

So, without encouragement of any kind, this great artist patiently laboured, etching with the strangest and most novel union of sobriety of manner with depth of poetical feeling. He printed a few copies of his plates, and left them with different booksellers and dealers in engravings; but the stream of life rolled past in its ceaseless flow, and paid as much attention to these jewels as the waves of the Mississippi give to some lost treasure on its banks. This neglect seems to have produced the first visible symptom of a mental malady, which may be spoken of here without indiscretion, as it has been already made public by the newspapers. Méryon became subject to the hallucination that he was surrounded by crafty and secret enemies who were constantly plotting against him. To this day these unhappy delusions have not been eradicated; and this noble etcher, whom now so many of us would be so happy to soothe with all tenderness, and honour with all respect, and defend (if need were) against all enemies, leads a dark life in the asylum at Charenton. A rumour has gone forth that he is dead, but he is not dead, nor is his mental health seriously worse than it has been for years past, but it is found that he enjoys comparative peace at Charenton; and there he quietly exists, working still, it appears, in his art, though he has published nothing lately. He had not fortitude enough for the long struggle with the world's ignorant indifference; and when fame and success came finally, they came too late.

As an etcher Méryon is remarkable for great certainty of hand combined with extraordinary caution. When at

work from nature, he stands, and without support of any kind holds both plate and mirror in one hand, laying the lines with the other, and so steadily that the most skilful etchers marvel at his skill. No work ever done in the world has been more absolutely honest, more free from executive affectation or pride of method. He has great subtlety and delicacy of observation, and a perception of truth so clear that it is strange how such bright insight can be compatible with any cloud or malady of the mind. His work is sanity itself, by its perfect and equal acceptance of various facts, by its patience and steadiness in study, by its caution and moderation in manner. Thus, as I pointed out some years ago, Méryon is picturesque, but not narrowly and exclusively picturesque; for when a pure line occurs in a modern or Renaissance building, he gives it with marked attention to its especial quality of purity. It is, perhaps, to this very capacity for appreciating purity that a certain peculiarity of Méryon may be due, which has occasioned a doubt whether he ought to be considered a great etcher, in the strict sense, or a great original engraver. He does not sketch so much or so freely as good etchers usually do, and there is a severity in his manner not always compatible with the ease of true etching. Nevertheless, I class him amongst true etchers on account of his frank use of the explanatory line, which is the chief test; added burin or dry-point work does not prove impotence with the etching-point, and is little more than a sort of glaze.

Considered psychologically, the work of Méryon is highly curious. It is thoughtful, reflective, intensely personal, and full of strange hints of a passionate fantasy, secret and subdued. This mental quality, far more than the manual dexterity of the artist, is the secret of his inexhaustible charm. He is a sort of enigma for us, which we are always trying to solve. Victor Hugo, with the clear eye of a poet, saw at once this mental fascination,

and saw that Méryon needed to be strengthened by all possible encouragements in his great struggle with the Infinite—the infinite of Paris, the infinite of the sea. This was said in Victor Hugo's peculiar way—he can never write without some allusion to the Infinite or the ocean—but in this case the word was not inapplicable. Méryon has evidently been an artist of vast and vague aspirations, though a dull critic might be prevented from seeing this by the unusual precision of his manner. Beyond the actual buildings which he draws there are suggestions of long and lonely meditation on life and nature, on time and space, and the bewildering abysses of immensity.

Le Stryge.—At an angle of one of the towers of Notre-Dame there is a horned and winged demon who perpetually contemplates Paris, his head resting on his hands, and his elbows on a flat ledge of stone. He looks down the Seine towards the pavilions of the Tuileries, and his stony eyes have watched through the long centuries the changes on its banks. The face wears an expression of quiet and contented observation; from the Middle Ages, when this demon first looked from his lofty post, there has been sin enough in the great city to afford him uninterrupted satisfaction. He saw the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and felt warm gladness in his heart of stone whilst the chants of thanksgiving rose musically in the choir below; nor was he less inwardly gratified when the slow processions of carts took the nobles to the guillotine and the chanting priests were silenced. Those uncouth ears have heard the roar and tumult of revolution, and the clamour of the near bells that shook the grey towers in the hour of triumph, when the versatile priesthood praised God and the powers that be. Nor have public crimes or public miseries been the demon's only consolation. Night after night he hears the low splash when the suicide leaps

into the water, and a steady continuous murmur of long lamentation and blasphemy.

When Méryon took the Stryge for a subject, it was with ideas of this kind. If we deduct the malignant feeling which may be attributed to a demon, the position of one who, from a lofty height, surveys the life of a great city, is simply the position of genius relatively to the multitude of men. And Méryon himself, who is a genius of the order most given to reflection and solitude, has not drawn his demon without some considerable amount of sympathy. Four ravens are flying about him in the free air, like the dark and morbid thoughts that visit a lofty but too much isolated mind; and thus, as we know, has Méryon been himself assailed.

I am not quite sure whether the obviously false tonality of this plate may not have been intentional, as the same fault certainly was in some engravings of Albert Durer; but when a critic allows these things to pass in a work which he admires, his silence may be imputed to ignorance. The intense black in the street under the tower of St.-Jacques destroys the impression of atmosphere; though at a considerable distance it is as dark as the nearest raven's wing, which cannot relieve itself against it. This *may* have been done in order to obtain a certain arrangement of black and white patches, but it seems unfortunate and is certainly untrue. The tower of St.-Jacques is, however, very right and beautiful, and so is the curious distance over the roofs.

La Pompe Notre-Dame.—If the reader will refer to Turner's Rivers of France, he will find a subject called the "Hôtel de Ville and Pont d'Arcole," in which the picturesque object that engaged Turner's attention and induced him to make the drawing is evidently a curious building in the middle of the river, and in the centre of the composition. This building consists of a tower and two wings, and it is entirely supported on a substructure of wooden scaffolding. This is the pump which

has furnished a subject for Méryon. His remarkable precision of hand, and his usually wise moderation in light and shade, have never been better exemplified. Take, for example, the exquisitely gentle curvature in the three main lines of the tower, and the entire absence of exaggerated blackness throughout the whole plate. Many of the wall surfaces are in the shade, but it is shade illuminated by reflection. The intricate arrangement of the massive carpentry is expressed with evident enjoyment and a strong sense of construction.

L'Abside de Notre-Dame de Paris.—The tonality here is somewhat less accurate than in the plate just criticised, but the questionable passages are chiefly in the bridge and houses; and the cathedral is a wonderful piece of work. There are, no doubt, many living engravers who could get quite safely through pieces of architecture not less elaborate, and many photographs have been taken from this very position which, as copies of the building, are much more mechanically perfect. The value of work of this kind is due to an exquisite artistic sensitiveness, which has presented the subject to us in such a way as to give it poetical interest.

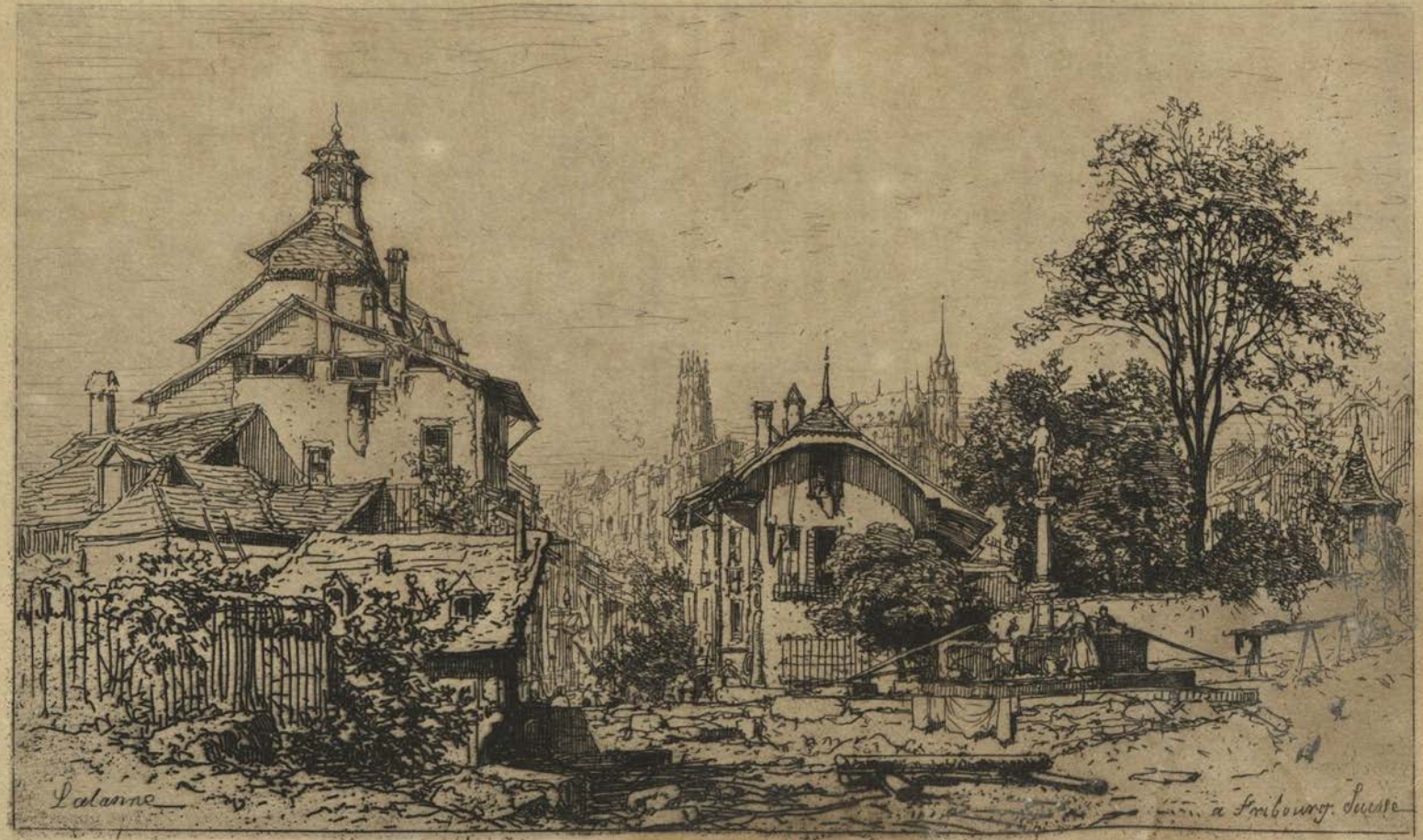
Tourelle, rue de la Tixéranderie, démolie en 1851.—The general reader may feel interested in this plate on account of its subject, which is one of those picturesque corner-turrets that the Scottish architects borrowed from the French, and which give so much character to many an old tower north of the Tweed. This was one of the finest examples which had escaped destruction down to the middle of the present century, and its demolition coincided with the erection of the first Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. From the artistic point of view this *tourelle* was worth considerably more than Sir Joseph Paxton's enormous shed, but its disappearance was not thought an event of much importance, except by a few eccentric people, like Méryon, who do not always estimate things by a tariff of material values. Readers who intend

to etch may find here much profitable study in the explanatory use of lines which constantly follow either the perspective of surfaces or the direction of shadows; and the plate has the additional advantage of showing, in a marked degree, how moderate and refined is Méryon's understanding of the picturesque. The stately turret and the free foliage of the vine about its base would have had charms for any sketcher, but Méryon alone could have seen the full artistic availableness of the modern chimneys and roof, and the contrasting value of the ugly modern house to the left. The explanatory use of line has, in one point, been carried a little too far. There is an attempt to render the appearance of wood, by a somewhat puerile imitation of its grain. It may be observed also that Méryon's readiness to accept unpicturesque material has made him a little too tolerant, when he gives us the bit of wall in the foreground forming an acute-angled triangle of the most painfully mechanical sort.

La Rue des Toiles, Bourges.—It is not easy to procure the etchings of Méryon, which, for the most part, are out of print, the plates having been destroyed; but the "Rue des Toiles" was given by the etcher to a friend of his, and I hired the copper for the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, in which it appeared in January 1864. The subject is a picturesque mediæval street; and though the etching is not so good as those mentioned above—for it has been over-bitten, and there is some confusion in the tonality,—it gives, nevertheless, an idea of Méryon's qualities as a mediævalist. Victor Hugo is known to be one of his warmest admirers, and these quaint details have much in common with Hugo's picturesque descriptions.

Le Pont Neuf.—Early proofs of the latest state in which all the dry-point work is given, show Méryon quite at his best. The Pont Neuf is the most picturesque of existing Parisian bridges; and however superfluous its

projecting turrets may have seemed to the utilitarian mind, they were always delightful to artists. This plate has been engraved for no other purpose than to show two of these turrets to the very best possible advantage; they are in full sunshine whilst all the rest of the plate is either in subdued middle tint or sombre depths of shade. From the impenetrable gloom under the massive arches to the aërial delicacy of the distant street, there is the widest range of executive resource; but whatever has been done either in massive arch, or flowing water, or many-storeyed houses, or clouded space of sky, has been done always in honour of those two turrets on the bridge. Even the third turret, that nearest us, has been sacrificed to them and cast into intentional shade; and when Méryon comes to the rounding of the far projecting cornice, where the gleam of sunshine falls, he follows every reflection with an indescribable pleasure and care. The wonder is that the delighted hand could work so firmly here, that it did not tremble with the eagerness of its emotion and fail at the very instant of fruition.


Lalanne
a Fribourg Suisse

CHAPTER V.

LALANNE.

MAXIME LALANNE is the first artist who ever received knighthood for his qualities as an etcher. When the King of Portugal conferred upon him the Order of Christ, it was expressly in recognition of the value of his etchings; but the King of Portugal is an etcher himself, and knows good work when he sees it.

No one ever etched so gracefully as Maxime Lalanne. This merit of gracefulness is what chiefly distinguishes him; there have been etchers of greater power, of more striking originality, but there has never been an etcher equal to him in a certain delicate elegance, from the earliest times till now.

He is also essentially a *true* etcher; he knows the use of the free line, and boldly employs it on due occasion. So far his work is very right, but it has the fault of too much system. Lalanne has reflected much upon his art, and has decided in his own mind that certain methods are good methods, and so he sticks to these on all occasions with a fidelity that amounts to a fault. No one can doubt, on looking at any plate by Lalanne, for example the one in this book, that he is a master of his craft, that he quite knows what he is about, that he is always perfectly safe, and will make the needle express anything he intends to express; but then, on the other hand, there is no reaching of the

mind beyond, no vague yearning after unattempted excellence, nor any of those half-failures that attend undefined and unlimited aspirations.

Lalanne is personally the most gentle and tolerant of artists, singularly free from that feeling of hostility towards art of an order different from his own, which is so common amongst painters. He is the only Frenchman I know who enjoys modern art without reference to nationality, and who can appreciate good work as readily when it comes from London as when it is a Parisian production. This characteristic is alluded to here, because it is always interesting to know everything about an artist which can throw light upon his work; and when the reader hears that Lalanne is a modest and true gentleman, just and liberal in his estimate of others, he will better appreciate the sincerity and good taste of his artistic performance.

The defect of too much system may be due in this instance, as it certainly was in that of Harding, to the habit of giving lessons. Few artists who give lessons escape from the temptation to invent and apply a definite method to everything, because such definite methods are the secret of apparent rapidity in teaching. If a great artist tried to make an amateur-pupil follow him in his searchings for unattempted expressions of unknown thoughts, if he himself became the "hierophant of an unapprehended inspiration," as Shelley said that poets are—and he included painters amongst poets—then the only consequence would be that the pupil would be left behind, alone in the pathless wilderness. A teacher who honestly tries to make his pupils learn something, endeavours to simplify art for them; that is, he eliminates the vagaries of special research, and makes art as systematic as possible. In doing this he runs infinite risk of spoiling his own art, by abandoning all that he finds to be unteachable; in other words, all that is rarest and best.

Rue des Marmousets (Vieux Paris).—A capital bit of street-sketching. In this street dwelt of old a pastry-cook who, with the help of his neighbour the barber, murdered a man in the pastry-cook's house and made pies of him, which were highly appreciated by the public. "C'est de tems immémorial que le bruit a couru qu'il y avait en la cité de Paris, rue des Marmousets, un pâtissier meurtrier, lequel ayant occis en sa maison un homme, aydé à ce par un sien voisin barbier, faignant raser la barbe: de la chair d'icelui faisait des pastez qui se trouvoient meilleurs que les aultres, d'autant que la chair de l'homme est plus délicate, à cause de la nourriture, que celle des aultres animaux." In M. Lalanne's etching the lines of the old houses, curving slightly and leaning back from the street, are followed with much interest and enjoyment, and every accident in wall or window is made the most of.

A Bordeaux.—A view of the city of Bordeaux, which has the honour of claiming Lalanne as one of its distinguished citizens. One of the least interesting of his plates. No doubt the cathedral spire and lofty tower with the scaffolding set up all round it are indicated with rare delicacy; no doubt the line of houses along the quay is suggestive of much wealth and large population; and the long bridge and the shipping are cleverly put in; and the boat in the foreground serves, with its black mass, as a vigorous *repoussoir*. Nevertheless, the plate is dull, and its dulness is to be attributed, I imagine, to the impervious blocking-up of the view by that too long and regular line of houses that stretches entirely across it.

Démolition pour le percement du Boulevard St.-Germain.—Though the conventional black shadow crosses the foreground, there is great delicacy and truth in the tall tower-like scaffolding, the houses in the middle distance, and the beautiful dome of the Pantheon, visible beyond, like a mountain-crest pale and delicately out-

lined, seen beyond a middle distance of rugged cliffs and a foreground of scattered boulders.

Démolition pour le percement de la Rue des Écoles.— The foreground is dark again under the conventional black shadow, but a glancing side-light illuminates an irregular block of houses, bringing their picturesque projections into strong relief. To the left is a delicate, light spire, probably that of the Sainte-Chapelle, seen through haze, and executed like the cathedral of Bordeaux in the plate criticised above. This spire, and the distant bit of street under it, are full of mystery, and by their extreme delicacy of tint give great force to the intentionally rude work in the foreground. It is a fixed principle with Lalanne to draw near objects with heavy and open lines, and distant ones with light and close lines, keeping a regular gradation between the two of gradually increasing refinement, as the needle passes from the foreground. Like all good etchers, he is very particular in making his lines *explanatory;* the direction of the shading in this foreground, always various, always carefully thought out, is an excellent instance.

Vue prise du Pont St.-Michel. — One of the most charming scenes which the improvements in Paris have opened out to us, and the most beautiful etching hitherto published by the French Club. The majestic domes of the new Louvre rise in their strange, accidental, unaccountable way above the long line of the great palaces of royalty and art; the Pont Neuf is just under them, all in shadow except its picturesque projections that catch the sunshine, and its graceful curve to the right, where it joins the brilliant quay. Soft reflections from the noble bridge fall undisturbed amongst the resting barges; and groups of trees whose artistic value the Parisian edile knows so well, stand by the noble river, having no more fear of the axe than if they sunned themselves on the loneliest shore of all her hundred leagues.

Aux Environs de Paris.—The foliage is very graceful and elegant, but the excessive love of waved lines in spray-drawing has led to some want of woody quality. It is the garden of one of those delightful habitations where the dainty taste of the Parisian architect has exercised itself in the free country, and where a rich man who is æsthetic enough to know the value of a beautiful dwelling may enjoy the possession of it in peace.

A Neuilly, Seine. — Notable for the same elegance as the preceding subject. The water is not sufficiently studied, but the foliage is beautiful.

Paris. Vue prise du Pont de la Concorde. — The largest etching by the artist, but by no means the best. The indication of distances is true as to tone, but neither the water nor the foliage is sufficiently studied. The water is not *level*, and there is an abuse of straight lines in the shading of the foliage. The plate is an attempt to introduce etching as a decoration for walls; this etching is intended for framing. It would be interesting to see further attempts in this direction, which might make the art somewhat more popular; but it may be doubted whether it is generally wise to attempt anything larger than the Callot in this book.

Chez Victor Hugo.—A series of twelve small etchings, some of which are remarkable for a minute delicacy, obtained without sacrifice of breadth. The best are the "Salon Rouge," the "Galerie de Chêne," the "Cheminée de la Galerie de Chêne," and the "Look Out." The "Porte de la Galerie de Chêne," and the "Cheminée de la Salle à Manger," may also be mentioned. These plates are not far removed in manner from contemporary English work, and are as good as the best of Horsley and Cope. As studies of still-life they are very admirable, but too photographic in their system of chiaroscuro, often losing detail in black where detail is still clearly visible in nature. Victor Hugo inhabits an ugly modern house, the inside of which he

has made as romantic as possible, with carved wood and collections of various kinds. The incongruousness between the Philistinism of the house itself, and the poetry of its contents, is very glaring, and would make the place even more intolerable to any one with a sense of fitness, than a Philistine dwelling consistently furnished on the principle of Philistinism.

Traité de la Gravure à l'Eau-forte (plate 3, opposite page 66, first edition, lowest of the three subjects on the plate).—M. Lalanne has published a useful treatise on etching, much better than any of its predecessors, and illustrated by his own hand. This little landscape-subject is the most delicate and most graceful landscape-etching ever executed in France since Claude's time. It is perfectly charming, and well worth the price of the whole book. The trees are rich and majestic, the water liquid, the bit of foreground vigorous and frank, the distance delicate and aërial. It is an epitome of Lalanne's excellence; and the only misfortune about it is, that, since it is published, not as a work of art, but as an illustration of method, nobody will pay any attention to it.

A Fribourg, Suisse (the etching given here).—Observe the exceeding elegance of the tree, and the intelligent indications of detail, expressing so much with so little. Is not the bit of distant city lovely? and does not the whole plate impress you with a sense of absolute sureness of method? If the reader should never see another plate by Lalanne, he may know him well by this, which is truly representative.

CHAPTER VI.

JACQUEMART.

JULES JACQUEMART is the most marvellous etcher of still-life who ever existed in the world. In the power of imitating an object set before him he has distanced all past work, and no living rival can approach him. Jacquemart has no invention, little art in composition, and probably neither a very retentive memory nor any profundity of thought, but he *sees* more clearly, and draws what he sees more exquisitely, than anybody else. He has pushed imitation in etching to the utmost imaginable refinement, and developed it to the utmost possible force. The union of these two qualities, force and refinement, was never more perfect, even in the work of the great men of the past; but it must be remembered that Jacquemart, though a true king in his art, is king of a minor realm. He is amongst etchers what Blaise Desgoffe is amongst painters, an unapproachable copyist of matter.

Such copyism as this amounts, in its way, to genius. The beauties which Jacquemart sees and reveals in a masterpiece of goldsmith's or lapidary's work are for the most part imperceptible by the common eye. Like a true artist and poet, he teaches us what to look for; and we come at last by his guidance to perceive magic qualities in the precious relics of the past, till cups of crystal and agate, and sword-hilts, or chalices of gold,

are for us themes of inexhaustible wonder, objects of unwearied interest and contemplation. I never knew the glory and beauty of noble old work in the precious stones and metals till Jules Jacquemart taught me. The "Joyaux" of the Louvre were familiar to me, but a veil hung between me and their true splendour; and it was only when Jacquemart had etched them one by one that I learned to know them truly. An egg of crystal belonged to a fortune-telling gipsy; her eyes could see magic figures in its watery clearness which revealed to her the hidden mysteries of fate; often have others looked into it, but always without apprehending the secret things of destiny. So we have our precious gems and vases, and we never know their inner wonder and significance till there comes a genius like Jacquemart, when suddenly the scales fall from our eyes, and for the first time in our lives *we see!* So true is this that the study of Jacquemart's etchings has definitely increased my enjoyment of common objects, such as plate and crystal on a dinner-table, and the veinings of marble, and the transparencies of jewels; I apprehend subtle lustres and reflections in these things which were once imperceptible to me, and I know that the difference is due to the etchings of Jules Jacquemart—I know this as positively as a man who has been successfully operated for cataract knows to what surgeon he owes the recovery of his sight.

Jacquemart has etched some landscapes and views of cities which show no sign of remarkable artistic powers. He has also published a work on book-binding, giving soft-ground etchings of many old designs, all executed in the prosiest possible way, and as unlike what he does now as the ugly duckling to the swan. His portraits are sometimes clever, and his compositions of flowers still more so, but it is conceivable that another man might attain the degree of skill shown in these etchings. When Jacquemart illustrated porcelain for a work of his father, "Histoire de la Porcelaine," he began to be inimitable; and

when he was called upon by the French Government to illustrate the jewels of the Louvre, he stood at last on his own ground, master of his subject, master of his means, safe from all human rivalry, a prince in a little fairy princedom of his own, full of enchanted treasures, full of gold and opal and pearls, of porphyry and sardonyx and agate, of jasper and lapis lazuli, all in the deepest and truest sense his own; for what rich man ever so truly possessed these things?

Histoire de la Porcelaine (plate 6).—The etching represents a Chinese dinner-plate and two cups. Jacquemart's principle of imitation has evidently been to give the greatest importance to local colour, and to admit only just so much effect as may be necessary to indicate the form of the object. There *is* effect, however, though often infinitely subtle, in every etching in the work; one side of an object is always more strongly lighted than the other side, and the light in its passage reveals, by hints of ineffable delicacy, the projections and hollows of the porcelain. The relation of local colour to chiaroscuro is here strictly that aimed at by Paul Veronese, and is precisely the one best fitted for the representation of painted ware. There are two personages: a lady in her garden, and her lover scaling the wall; both have black hair, which, in each case, occurs on a part of the plate which is in full light, but Jacquemart takes no notice of this, and makes the hair as black as he possibly can. This is justifiable because both heads are surrounded by perfectly white porcelain, which by contrast would make the hair strike us as two patches of absolute black, even in full light.

Histoire de la Porcelaine (plates 14 and 15).—Especially marvellous for the imitation of texture and surfaces. If the reader will observe the way in which Jacquemart has imitated the *craquelé* and the *soufflé* in the two vases of plate 14, and the lower part of the tea-pot in plate

15, and then study the rich colouring of the upper part of the same tea-pot, he will agree with me that when etchers fail to render texture, it is either because they disdain it, or because they have not mastered the art, and not from any defect inherent in the nature of the process.

Huit Études et Compositions de Fleurs.—It is not necessary to offer special criticism of any of these compositions, but I may direct attention to qualities which are common to all of them. The true nature of the petals of a flower has never, to my knowledge, been so well expressed in art. The petal of a flower, considered simply as tissue, is quite unlike anything we are accustomed to manufacture. It is never of the same thickness throughout, it is never precisely of the same shade, it bulges and curls, and softly droops and falls till its surfaces are presented to the light in a thousand unimaginable ways. Alone amongst draughtsmen, Jacquemart has fully comprehended this; and as his hand, better than any other human hand, has rendered the hardness of porphyry and the inflexible fragility of porcelain, so also it has most truly interpreted the tender shades and complex delicate lines on which depend the untidiness of the poppy, and the beauty of the rose.

Gemmes et Joyaux de la Couronne: Plate 2, *Vase antique de Sardoine.*—There is nothing in the form of this vase to merit the labour of Jacquemart, for it resembles a common pitcher; but as the material was dark and very highly polished, the whole object is covered with various reflections, which are imitated with a degree of force and audacity extremely rare amongst copyists of such things as this. Jacquemart has a studio in the Louvre, and there the precious vases are brought to him; they stand upon his table till he has done with them, and the table is near to a window. This window is reflected over and over again on the polished surface of the stone, and the reader may observe how much of the brilliancy of

the etching depends upon the contrast between the white sky in the window-panes and the black shades where they are not reflected. He may also perceive the utility of the straight lines of the window-frames, which are here curved in very various directions, and express by their curvature the form of the surfaces which reflect them.

Gemmes et Joyaux: Plate 6, *Vase antique de Porphyre.*—An Abbot of St. Denis had an Egyptian vase of porphyry, and, wishing to make use of it for his altar, had a great golden eagle added to it. In Jacquemart's etching the chief marvel is the imitation of the speckled and polished porphyry, which is amazing. The wings and neck of the golden eagle are interpreted with work as simple in manner as an ordinary pen-drawing, yet clearly expressing the nature of the thing.

Gemmes et Joyaux: Plate 18, *Vase de Jaspe oriental.*—The goldsmith's work on this vase is attributed to Cellini, and I mention it for the contrast in manner between the extreme precision of the etching on the golden handles, and the mystery of mingled veining and reflection in the jasper. That piece of jasper is marvellously pre-eminent, even in this catalogue of marvels.

Gemmes et Joyaux: Plate 19, *Hanap de Cristal de Roche.*—A drinking vessel of the time of Francis I. cut in rock crystal, in the similitude of a fish. Of all the substances Jacquemart has imitated, crystal is certainly the most difficult, because it affords so few vigorous oppositions. It is especially difficult when set by itself, in this way, without the help of a background or of any opaque object for contrast. The power of cutting clearly is a point of sympathy between the etcher and the carver of the crystal, and the etcher becomes for the time, by sympathy, in imagination a crystal-cutter. When Jacquemart did this he thought of crystal only, and of copper-plates not at all.

Gemmes et Joyaux: Plate 20, *Coupe de Jaspe oriental.*—I think this is the most exquisite cup, in point of form,

in the whole French collection. Observe the sure drawing of the rim, six curves all made different by perspective, and inexpressibly difficult. See also the different treatment of the two handles, and of the dolphins below the cup.

Gemmes et Joyaux: Plate 23, *Drageoir de Cristal de Roche.*—Here is the same perspective difficulty in the drawing of the rim, in still greater complexity. There is a fine *flow* in the lines, in the raised centre of the cup, like the lines that the reins take when a man drives many horses abreast. After etching a bright transparent thing like this, with such beautiful and elaborate curves, Jacquemart could etch a wave, if only it would stay for him; but the condition of consummate imitative work is always that the subject must stay to be studied.

Gemmes et Joyaux: Plate 28, *Salière de Lapis Lazuli.*—There is so much local colour here that when once we have been told the material, we see it as if it had been painted, with all its depths of azure, and glittering faults of pyrites. The methods of work adopted here are entirely different from those used in the preceding subject, for Jacquemart is so versatile, and adapts his art so readily to the imitation of various materials, that every new kind of matter exacts from him the invention of new arrangements of line.

Gemmes et Joyaux: Plate 30, *Coupe de Jaspe oriental.*—There is a little group at one end of this cup, Neptune and Amphitrite, which may be taken as a more than commonly severe test of Jacquemart's power of drawing. It is very beautiful, even the hands, notwithstanding their minuteness, are given with perfect accuracy. Observe the lightness of the pale golden trident, and its contrast with the rich dark of the jasper.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLES JACQUE.

READERS who wish to know more about Charles Jacque and his labours than I have space for here, are recommended to procure M. Guiffrey's Catalogue of Jacque's etchings, which was published in 1866 by Mdlle. Lemaire, 110, Boulevard de Magenta, Paris.

Charles Jacque was born in Paris in 1813. At the age of seventeen he was placed with a geographical engraver, but did not like the work and enlisted as a soldier. His military career lasted seven years, during which he was present at the siege of Antwerp. After his return to the life of a civilian, Jacque spent two years in England, where he worked as a draughtsman on wood; and these seem to have been his only absences from France. He had relations in Burgundy, and during his visits to these relations he found the material for many of his best etchings. Burgundy is a very good country for an etcher; the rustic life is more than usually picturesque, and there are plenty of old buildings and bits of good landscape. The true French picturesque is seldom seen in greater perfection than in Burgundy; it exists there in the most profuse abundance, but in odd places where no one but an artist would know how to discover it. Jacque had the right instinct for material of this kind, and made good use of it, as many an etching of his still testifies. His farm-yards and scenes of rustic life are most of them reminiscences of this region, and

to me—who have lived in Burgundy for years—they have a familiar air, a look of home, which proves that they render not only the details of local truth, but the spirit of the land.

Charles Jacque is a painter, and a constant contributor to the *Salon*. I dislike his paintings for their false and unpleasant colour, but he knows sheep and poultry well, and is a master of rustic life. His skill in drawing poultry may be partly accounted for by the fact that he is himself a distinguished fancier and breeder.

Of his quality as an etcher it is not easy to speak briefly. Some of his works are very manly, and others very effeminate; some are imitative, others in a high degree interpretative; some are rapid and intuitive, others slow and painfully laborious. I dare not say, in a general way, that I like him, because there is some work of his which I cannot like; but, on the other hand, I feel anxious not to leave an unfavourable impression of a man who will certainly be remembered as one of the master etchers of our time. He has etched more than four hundred plates, and out of these hundreds a selection might be made which, in its way, would bear a comparison with much of the most famous work of past centuries.

The fact is that Jacque is not always a true etcher, but yet that in many plates he *is* unexceptionably a true etcher. He can work, when in the humour, in as genuine a way as any master whatever, but he is subject to a hankering after dainties in execution, which are not wholesome, artistic pastry and sweets, which a masculine appetite ought not to trouble itself about. Jacque draws very admirably when the subject of his drawing is one that he has a great affection for; I have noticed, for instance, that in his farm-yards the utensils are drawn with a degree of truth and precision very unusual in art, and no man ever drew poultry better. He does not really draw trees, however, though he conveys the sentiment of landscape. His deep and sincere love of simple country-life

gives a great charm to many of his etchings, and is entirely conveyed to the spectator. A sentiment of this kind escapes analysis, but communicates itself in a wonderful ineffable way. No artist ever had the sentiment of *rusticity* in a purer form than Jacque. This is quite a different feeling from the great passion for landscape, and artists who have the nobler passion scorn it. The sentiment of rusticity is strictly a classical one; that is, it springs up always towards the close of rigidly classical periods in art. It is quite natural that Troyon, Charles Jacque, Rosa Bonheur, and such others should arise at the close of the classical movement which ended with Ingres. Of all the rustic artists Charles Jacque has the simplest and purest feeling; and his Parisian contemporaries, who for the most part are indifferent to the noble landscape-passion, enter without difficulty into an idyllic poetry of this kind. Notwithstanding our Northern breeding, and the influences of our recent literature, we may also enjoy a rusticity which is genuine and sincere.

A Pastoral.—A flock of sheep with a shepherd and dog. Further description is unnecessary, because the plate, although without title, is the frontispiece to M. Guiffrey's Catalogue. I mention it on account of the probability that the reader, if interested in Charles Jacque, will either procure the Catalogue or already possess it.

The chief merits of this little pastoral are unity of manner and simplicity of purpose. It has a delightful appearance of ease, and belongs to that small class of artistic performances in which there is, strictly speaking, no study, but only the results of study. In one sense, we have here the work of three hours, in another the work of thirty years. The subject may be taken as representative of Jacque's pastorals generally; the landscape is so commonplace as to seem insignificant, yet its very triviality gives a familiar look of truth. The only variety in the land is a difference of level of about a

foot, forming a kind of step which repeats itself on the sheep's backs as they slowly advance together. There are three or four willows beyond the sheep, and two young ash-trees on this side of them, but their treatment is freely interpretative, and the leafage is not more studied than the grass in the foreground, which is represented by a few open and careless strokes.

Une Ferme (Guiffrey, 189).—The farm has two gables and a thatched roof beyond. There are two walls, one to the left coming near to the spectator, and above which are seen the trees of an orchard whose branches overhang and cast shadows down it. The other wall is at right angles to the line of building, and in the shade; beyond it rise lofty trees. A flock of sheep, in a state of much hurry and excitement, are driven by a shepherd and his dog in a direction away from the spectator; amongst the sheep are two cows, and a third cow is driven by another man along the shaded wall. In the immediate foreground are a cock and four hens on a dunghill.

This is one of the finest of Charles Jacque's farms; in some of them the finish is pushed unnecessarily far, but the work here is serious and manly. The texture of the long wall with the gables is as good as Decamps', and the colouring of the roofs and of the dark tree masses is boldly right and true. The action of the crowding sheep is given with perfect vivacity. There is an apparent rudeness in the open shading of the sky which pleases me by its frank avowal that, although a rough wall may be translated imitatively as to texture, sky and cloud cannot be. Painters have a superstition that every subject needs an escape into the remote distance, and nine men out of ten would have knocked down the wall to the right and given us, in place of it, a league or two of landscape. Charles Jacque has acted much more wisely; he needed the inclosure as a characteristic of farm-precincts, and as an element in the expression of homeliness.

Petits, petits! (Guiffrey, 187.)—A boy is seated on a board, which rests upon two barrels, and a little girl leans upon the same board near him. The boy is feeding poultry.

If this etching had appeared in one of the best publications of the English Club, it would have borne comparison, as a specimen of essentially modern finish, with the best work of Hook or Frederick Tayler; and although the Germans have made laborious attempts in the same direction, they have not yet surpassed such work as this. I feel, however, with regard to this plate, and others of a like quality by the same master, the same sense of approval, under protest, which I have already expressed in speaking of Boissieu and others. The subject is charming, the composition admirable, and the execution skilful beyond praise; but this is not the kind of skill that a noble etcher ought to care for and aim at. These *tours de force* in soft shading, like chalk spread with the stump; these little specks of reserved light, like touches of white on a lithograph; these pretty bits of accurate imitation on hoops of barrel and plumage of bird, however dexterous and inimitable in their way, are scarcely worth the toil they cost.

If we think of this simply as a picture, our criticism is disarmed, and we can but do homage to its sweetness and truth. There is poetry in the very title, *Petits, petits!* The children are not artist's models, but real country-children feeding their favourites, as it seems to us, in some quiet corner where no one sees them. It is an hour of happy idleness; the simple meal is ended, but one morsel of bread remains which these grateful fowls may share.

L'Hiver (Guiffrey, 195).—In the middle of the foreground a youth is seated with a stick between his legs; he turns his head to look at a girl who is driving two cows. He himself has the charge of eleven pigs. To the right is part of a pool of water, and above the swine-

herd the border of a wood. The etching is signed in the right-hand corner, "Ch. Jacque, 1864." There is a want of brilliancy in this etching amounting almost to dulness. The figure of the swineherd is easy and natural, but it is the only really good thing in the plate. There are many trunks of trees which are neither scientific nor imaginative. The subject is agreeably arranged, but feebly executed. It is pretty, and only pretty—a criticism which equally applies to several other works by the same artist.

Le Labourage (Guiffrey, 182).—A man ploughing with a pair of horses. The horses are drawn with great truth, and all the details about the harness and plough are rendered with careful fidelity. The figure of the man is less successful, and the landscape is somewhat meagre and poor. A more powerful landscape-painter would have drawn the dark earth, as it turns over and falls from the plough-share, with far greater force than this. The earth here looks as much like spread hay as the cloven soil.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAUBIGNY.

WHEN a critic has been long devoted to the practical study of art, he may often arrive, by means of experiment, at conclusions concerning the especial powers of artists, which must be inaccessible to the pure theorist. Some years ago the present writer had an unfeigned contempt for Daubigny, on the ground of his ignorance or negligence of form; but some practical attempts in oil-colour and etching, to attain the qualities of Daubigny's work, convinced him that whatever might be the shortcomings or defects of that artist, he deserved at least our most respectful consideration. The accurate delineation of form has not been amongst his purposes, and so it has come to pass that he either cannot draw, or will not; but let us ever remember that he *has* purposes, and that the abandonment of form is a deliberate sacrifice made for the attainment of these ends. What Daubigny cares for, and aims at, is an artistic unity of aspect; and as he paints or etches invariably for this unity, thinking of *the whole* only, and never about parts, except as portions of the whole, it has come to pass that he apparently neglects the parts, and so an animal or a branch may be shapeless, but the picture is not shapeless. Whether the result attained may or may not be worth such great sacrifices, may be doubtful, but it does not seem doubtful to me. I feel satisfied that Daubigny, both as painter and etcher, has found his true expression, and that this expression in

his case is well worth the sacrifice of accuracy in form. But might he not, by perseverance, have drawn better without missing artistic unity? I believe not; I believe that any attempt to preserve such drawing as is popularly considered good, would have nullified his whole work, whilst the far more arduous ambition of thoroughly good draughtsmanship would have turned his efforts into quite a different channel; so that the Daubigny whom we know would have had no artistic existence. There are many varieties of bad drawing: there is Daubigny's, which is perfectly honest, and never sets itself up for more than it is,—nay, which is willing to pass, and does constantly pass, for even less than it is; and there is the laborious and pretentious bad drawing, which is popularly considered very good, and which always escapes censure, except from true students. Take, for instance, a cow, by some popular cattle-painter, with every bone in its body out of place, and every joint so constructed that an animal built in that fashion could never walk; these defects will not attract notice if only there is a certain appearance of precision, a certain sharpness of touch, and neat brushwork on a carefully imitated surface. A cow by Daubigny is not in reality more badly drawn, but then everybody sees its shapelessness at the first glance, because Daubigny has none of the tricks of the painter who works for the market, and in the simplicity of a noble artist-nature scorns the little artifices by which ignorance is concealed. The one thing that he aims at he secures: he aims at unity, and he secures unity. This unity of aspect is in reality intimately associated with unities of sentiment and thought, and springs from them. Daubigny does not think much, or feel much, about the cow and the branch: it is the whole landscape which charms and attracts him; and in his actual work his attention never quits the picture to apply itself to this or that portion of his materials.

The rough, and apparently "unfinished," etchings of

Daubigny may seem easy to the inexperienced, and a certain proportion of them are, no doubt, failures, even if considered strictly from the artist's point of view. But if the reader will study those mentioned below, and then attempt to do free work in the same sense, and with the same directness and simplicity of intention and method, he will find the task more arduous than it perhaps appears. An etching like the Daubigny given here, which looks easy enough, is almost as unapproachable as the wonderful imitative work of Jacquemart. The difficulty of this simple and straightforward etching consists in its very simplicity and straightforwardness. When a plate has evidently been tormented and mended till it came into shape, there is some hope that by labour and correction we may arrive at a like result; but when these means are forbidden to us by the very nature of the thing to be imitated, the difficulty is greatly increased. What Daubigny does, as an etcher, may not seem at first sight very astonishing, but he expresses himself, and he expresses himself at once. It is like apt and ready oratory, of which the excellence lies quite as much in promptitude as in power.

All this may be said without endorsing the weakest and most trifling etchings of Daubigny. There are several plates, for instance, in the "Voyage en Bateau," which are too trifling to be criticised, and in which the facetiousness of the artist has led to a momentary forgetfulness of art.

Voyage en Bateau: le Dejeuner à l'Auberge.—Five men are seated at table on rush-bottomed stools, and under a vine; they are drinking coffee and smoking pipes after *déjeuner*. (The first plate of the series, and one of the best.) As a simple sketch on the copper, this may be taken as a model for honesty and simplicity of workmanship. The foliage of the vine is not very good, considered separately as foliage, but it takes its place well in the composition. The etching holds well together,

and the relations of tone are unexceptionable. Observe the rapid indication of the vine shadow on the wall, in free open lines running in the right direction. The figures are true landscape-painter's figures, and drawn without pretension.

Voyage en Bateau: la Recherche de l'Auberge.—Two figures, one holding a lantern, are seeking their way in a dark night. The cabin of the boat is just visible low down to the left, and there are some dark houses to the right. The sky is cloudy, but there is subdued light in two grey spaces behind the formless clouds. This is very genuine and perfect work of its kind, and there are some very fine passages. The various lights and darks immediately above the lantern, and especially the obscurity near the cover of it, are amongst the finest.

Voyage en Bateau: Daubigny travaillant dans sa Cabine.—This etching is given here, and is one of the most interesting, as well as one of the best, of the series. A gleam of sunshine lights the canvas on which Daubigny is working, and one or two other canvases which are leaned against the wall of the cabin. The rest of the plate is either in shadow or more or less illuminated by reflection. The lighting is true and good, and the use of the etched line everywhere frank and right. The reader may amuse himself by enumerating the contents of Daubigny's little floating studio. They are not luxurious, and the only signs of self-indulgence are a rather extravagant supply of onions and short pipes, and a coffee-pot. There are also a gridiron and a frying-pan, and three wine bottles. These, with bare shelter and the bed that is turned up in the corner, are ample materials for happiness, if only those canvases get on prosperously. Better a little cabin like this, with the satisfaction of doing good work, than the most splendid studio in Paris, with an inward conviction of incapacity. I would rather be Daubigny here, and cook my own dinner and make my own bed, than

Daubigny
Imp. Delâtre Paris

be a certain Commander of the Legion of Honour whom I could name, who, in his palace of the Champs-Elysées, is compelled by the devil to paint, year after year, with the clear knowledge that he is a charlatan.

Voyage en Bateau: la Nuit sur la Rivière.—The boat is to the left of the etching, lighted by a lantern. The opposite shore is dimly visible, and both sky and water are covered with dark shading. There is nothing here but a sentiment; and if the mind of the reader is inaccessible to that sentiment, the etching for him will be meaningless and absurd. In that case let me beg him to pass it without bitterness of condemnation. The present writer's experiences of boats and tents give him the key to Daubigny's motive. The little cabin is alone on the dark water, under the dark sky; the shore is formless, vague, impenetrable. The only shelter is in that tiny floating house; the only light from the candle in that lantern.

Voyage en Bateau: les Aides.—A lot of children with a small four-wheeled wagon take Daubigny's things for him to the boat. A sketch of this kind opens the great question whether landscape-painters ought to attempt figure-subjects or not. These figures have no pretension to correct draughtmanship, and yet severe figure-painters are delighted with them. This may be explained by the fact that, if there is little power, there is still less pretension. The artist does not pretend to draw the figure otherwise than as he has been always accustomed to draw it for the enlivenment of his landscapes. The children are beautifully grouped, and the action of the boy in front is free and lively.

Parc à Moutons: le Matin (a large plate which appeared in the first number of the French Etching Club's publication).—The subject is the inside of a sheep-fold at early morning, the dawn brightening on the horizon above the level line of paling which crosses the etching from side to side. There are a few low trees and a little hut on

wheels, with a low swelling in the land, beyond the palings crowned by some distant bushes, and a small [illegible] the left. The sheep are grandly grouped, and [illegible] heavy with sleep. A long flight of birds [illegible] from the east. The impression conveyed is dreary and uncomfortable, with a good deal of solemn and sad feeling. The execution is frank and apparently coarse.

Le Gué.—Twelve cows are just going to cross a broad river with a herd-boy behind them. A large tree extends its branches over the water. The opposite shore is bare and uninteresting.

An etching of this kind is not to be criticised bit by bit; its one merit is a certain largeness of aspect. Referring the reader to the earlier chapters of this book for fuller commentary on these qualities, I may say here that the plate before us is valuable for its frankness and comprehensiveness, not for any accuracy or beauty of design. The cows are all out of drawing, the branches are ungraceful, the foliage is ugly, the sky is coarse, and the distance poor; yet, in spite of all these faults, the etching is not only a fine one, but one of the finest executed in this century. Directness of intention and amplitude of aspect are perfectly compatible with the most obvious imperfections in parts.

Les Vendanges (this is Plate 161 in the publication of the *Société des Aquafortistes*).—It is quite a remarkable instance of Daubigny's obtuseness and inaccuracy as a draughtsman. The oxen are no more like oxen than sacks of flour, except that they are decorated with horns. The wheels of the *char* resemble nothing so much as very broad-brimmed straw hats balancing themselves miraculously on the edge of their brims. All the beauty of the vine leafage is neglected, and the figures of the *vignerons* are no better than the oxen. There are hills in the distance and clouds in the sky, but both hills and clouds are formless. And still I keep this etching, and value it, because it is a perfect harmony both in sentiment

and in tone, one of the most absolutely harmonious plates ...w. The least bit of accurate drawing, or of what ...ers call "finish," in any one detail, would have ...d the whole work unless it could have been carried ...er the entire extent of it. It is not to be supposed ... Daubigny is quite unable to draw a cart-wheel or ...'s horn; and when he drew these in this apparently ...ile way, we may rely upon it that he knew what he ...bout. The purpose of this etching has been a certain unity of aspect, which has been purchased by the sacrifice of many truths which another artist might have been unwilling to surrender.

CHAPTER IX.

APPIAN, JONGKIND, AND OTHERS.

SINCE Appian and Jongkind are both true etchers, I wish to express respect for them by mentioning them by name at the head of a chapter which is to include many less distinguished artists.

Few living etchers have given me more pleasure, of a certain quiet kind, than Appian. There is always, both in his pictures and his etchings, a delicate thoughtfulness, a true and refined sentiment, compatible with the most various degrees of finish, and in unison with a love of nature strong enough to make his observation keen, yet not so exclusive as to lead to any unfortunate predominance of the imitative faculties. Our English language, in many respects so much richer than French, is poorer in artistic terms, and we have not even an equivalent for so common a word as *croquis*. A *croquis* is still slighter than a sketch, yet not on that account by any means easier, or more tolerant of ignorance and carelessness. A *croquis* must be done at once, and always with a very limited expenditure of time; in other words, there must be no correction, and there is not time enough for explanation. This form of art looks the easiest of all, and yet in reality is one of the most difficult. The best examples of it are always rough notes of artistic ideas, without the least pretence to imitative truth. When two artists are talking together in the intimacy of friendship—two artists who thoroughly understand each other—they

A. Appian sculp.

Imp. Delâtre, Rue St. Jacques, 303, Paris.

ENVIRONS DE RIX (Ain)

will often explain their intentions as to future pictures by rapidly noting down their ideas. Notes of this kind, intended for a very limited and a very highly cultivated public, are often the truest and best of *croquis*.

Almost all the little etchings of Appian are sketches of this kind. The one given here, "Environs de Rix," is not the best, technically, because I selected it rather for its fine sentiment than for technical merit, but it has great freedom, and there is no superfluous work. In a much smaller etching with a group of poplars in the middle distance, a pond to the left, and the figure of a boy walking towards the spectator in the foreground, there is a delicacy which the reader will not find in the "Environs de Rix." There are one or two little river subjects which are very charming for their entire freedom from constraint. But all these minor sketches might be severely, though unfairly, criticised for want of form; it is easy to demonstrate that the foliage in them is not drawn, but replaced by a mere confusion of intricate lines, and that there is no detail in their foregrounds. Such criticism, when applied to a *croquis*, is manifestly unfair, because if a *croquis* is an intelligible memorandum of an artistic idea, it has fulfilled its purpose, and nothing more is to be required of it; but Appian can go further when he pleases. The "Chemin des Roches," which was printed in the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review* for January 1864, is remarkable for two qualities by no means common in French etching: masterly drawing of tree-trunks, and an irreproachably just tonality. I remember no modern plate in which the intention of the artist has received more clear and successful interpretation, and there is certainly not one whose arrangement of light is more completely pictorial.

Amongst Appian's contributions to the *Société* may be especially mentioned "Une Mare, Environs de Rossillion," which is nothing less than the most exquisite piece of free branch and stem drawing in recent French art. It is this,

and much more than this; for not only are the trees full of an inexpressible waywardness and grace, but the whole work: the bit of rocky bank, the little inlet of calm water, the sweet distance, and the delicate sky,—all this material forms a perfect harmony, presented to us with the true passion of a tender and sensitive artist. No one but an artist can know how much this little place must have been loved before it could be etched so; how many happy hours must have been passed there in tranquil meditation, till the grace of those slender stems and sprays, and their wild caprice of curve, became an important fact in the universe, a thing to be published to the citizens of Paris.

Jongkind has a temperament very different from that of Appian. People who are not much accustomed to estimate artists by truth and unity of impression, and who look to minor detail for a test of mastery, will half suspect me of affectation when I say that Jongkind is one of the most genuine artists now living. Readers who have studied Topffer will remember what he says about the difference between identity and resemblance. If I draw a thing quite accurately, I give, not something resembling the form, but the actual form itself, as it strikes the retina. But it is possible to give a resemblance of the form, very remote from identity, and yet much more interesting to the spectator, interesting even from the very contradiction between its demonstrable inaccuracy and its curious look of truth. Well, the etchings of Jongkind have this particular interest in the highest degree. They are obviously inaccurate, they are mere skeletons of subjects, having no closer relation with the scenes they represent than a puppet has to a man, but they are wonderfully expressive of aspect and character. No one can see the "Entrée du Port de Honfleur" without a dreary sense of being at a seaport on a dull day: it is easy to observe that the subject is ugly; so it is, but how the stiff lines of the quay, and the hotel of the "Cheval Blanc," and the

other unlovely buildings, all help the intended effect upon the mind! In the "Vue du Port au Chemin de Fer à Honfleur," we have as thoroughly awkward a subject, artistically considered, as it would be possible to find anywhere: no beauty nor grace, but the very opposite of beauty and grace; unpleasant straight lines of rails, and edge of quay vanishing like a perspective diagram; gaunt masts of mean shipping, ungainly figures, and distance quite destitute of attraction; yet these things, used by Jongkind in the simplest and sincerest way, convey an impression so clear and direct that the spectator feels exactly the same uncomfortable sensations that he would feel upon the quay itself. I never can look at Jongkind's etchings of seaports without being carried at once to the quays of Havre or Boulogne, with all the unsettled, disagreeable condition of mind that one experiences in such places when one's stay there is nothing better than a stoppage in a tiresome and often-repeated journey. No other artist reproduces this condition of mind in me so surely and so instantaneously; and this proves a great power—the power of etching a mental impression. In Jongkind's largest plates there is never more than an hour's work, and not a single object is studied or drawn; yet, if the end of art is to convey artistic ideas, this is art. Of all his etchings I think the finest is the "Sortie du Port de Honfleur;" it entirely expresses the motion of water-surface, calm, yet not asleep, with its ceaseless *miroitement*, the richness of an elaborate sky, the stately rest of a vessel at anchor, the swift gliding of sloops, the activity of little cock-boats, the steady course of a departing steamer.

M. Chifflart has published a series of *improvisations* which are marked by great confidence and a right understanding of the freedom of etching, but injured by some defects of taste. They are occasionally grotesque, and usually marked by some bitterness of feeling; they seem like reminiscences of very vivid but unpleasant dreams. The "Jour de Récompense" is a classical caricature of a crowd

of candidates struggling to approach the judges who deliver prizes; it is strikingly hideous, but there is real power in the conception, and much spontaneous energy in the execution. Another very hideous subject is Mammon scattering gold pieces from his horn of plenty, whilst men are struggling for them with the most murderous ferocity, and women trying to obtain them by the power of beauty, without shame. In the "Surprise" we have a group of men on horseback attacked by lionesses, the wild beasts leaping with much agility; and there is a terrible scene of men given over to the Furies, two of whom lift their lashes mercilessly, whilst the third holds the mirror of iniquity. In all these etchings there are real energy and invention; but, though Chifflart is unquestionably a man of genius, it is a coarse and brutal kind of genius, in which the gentleness of the high artistic nature is not perceptible. Power of this kind always, however, finds its admirers; and since Goya has a large public, I see no reason why Chifflart should not have one also, for he etches much better than Goya, and is not more destitute of gentleness and sweetness.

If the reader takes an interest in modern French painters, the name of Corot must be familiar to him. Corot has now a great fame in France; he and Daubigny stand, in point of reputation, at the head of French landscape-painters. The first impression of an Englishman, on looking at his works, is that they are the sketches of an amateur: it is difficult, at first sight, to consider them the serious performances of an artist. A more intimate knowledge of French art and its objects leads to a more respectful estimate of Corot. He is a poet—not a great one, but perfectly genuine in his way. He feels the mystery of nature; he feels the delightfulness of cool grey mornings and dewy evenings; he feels the palpitating life of gleaming river-shores, and the trembling of the light branches wherein the fitful breezes play. He has an intense sense of the glimmering indecision and

mystery of natural appearances, and he does not, as it seems to us, draw and paint with precision, simply because his attention does not fix itself on that which is precise. His attempts in etching are interesting, but quite without value as art; he is a still worse draughtsman than Daubigny, and either cannot or will not draw so much as a leaf or a branch. What I have said about his poetical temperament is, however, fully borne out by such a plate as the "Souvenir d'Italie," which is the best of his known to me. It is very much what a second-rate yet true poet, quite ignorant of drawing, would be likely to produce; and, as often happens to poetical painters, Corot is, by his own peculiar gift, blinded to nine facts out of ten. What he sees about branches is merely their lightness and intricacy, not their stiff woody structure and their strength. Leaves glimmer and dance before him, but he neither perceives their shape when separate, nor their wealth and weight in masses. Of course he cannot see any form in clouds, nor in foreground vegetation.

It is possible, however, to be too positive and prosaic as it is to be too unsubstantial. The exact opposite of Corot is Martial, a man of great mechanical skill, and much accuracy of observation, but without the charm of poetical insight and selection. The first etching I remember seeing by Martial was the "Door of the Sacristy of the College at Beauvais," and that etching was so very conscientious, besides being such sound work, that I examined each of his sixty-four plates on "Old Paris" with care and attention; the result was not so favourable as I had hoped. Martial is a trustworthy and unaffected workman, but neither in invention nor perception comparable to Méryon. There is some very rich and perfect work in the "Tourelle de l'Hôtel Schomberg." In the "Rue du Pantour St. Gervais," the curious slope and curvature of the old Parisian house-fronts are quite rightly felt and rendered; and in the "Rue des Prêcheurs," a Gothic carved tree at the corner of the house, bearing

ecclesiastics for fruit, is imitated with much delicacy and skill. But of all Martial's etchings the one which most entirely represents his combination of prosaic feeling with great manual skill, is the view of M. Cadart's handsome shop-front in the Rue Richelieu. As a piece of imitation it is a *tour de force*, and the nearest approach to the work of the mirror in all modern etching. Jacquemart's imitation has a certain sensitiveness which places it above the mirror, but this plate by Martial is as true as the looking-glass, and as cold.

It is not without pleasure that I mention here the name of Villevieille, an artist of much feeling, who died, like our own Girtin, in early manhood. I give a plate of his here, partly as an illustration of Villevieille's peculiar temperament, partly to show the use of the *roulette* in shading by means of small dots,—a process which, though in this instance successful, is on the whole superfluous and decidedly injurious to the purity of etching as an independent art. This etching, "En Picardie," is full of sweet feeling, and there is a certain tender melancholy, not only here but in other works by the same artist, which seems to imply something like a foreboding of his early death.

Longueville, I believe, is an amateur, but he is certainly a very skilful one. No marine-painter whom I remember has better expressed the majesty of a modern war-fleet. He is fond of naval magnificence, and understands it both artistically and as an observer of seamanship. The objection to his work is the grave artistic error of losing his darks in absolute black, so that his shadows are usually quite black. This is a complete mistake, due to a want of study of the inevitable artistic compromises. In the plate given here, "Sous Voiles courant grand Largue," this fault is visible only in the shadows on the nearest sails; but some other plates, as for instance "Au Mouillage" and "En Mer," are altogether spoiled by it. In this subject the reader cannot fail to remark the admirable

L. Villevieille sculpt.

Imp. Delâtre, Rue St. Jacques, 303, Paris.

EN PICARDIE.

SOUS VOILES COURANT GRAND LARGUE.

rendering of the effect of six different distances on the appearance of a ship: this is the artistic purpose of the etching, and with right artistic cunning the nearest ship is brought close to the most remote one. The water is very liquid and good, and the sense of being at sea perfectly communicated. In the "Sous Vapeur" a steam-fleet is going at speed on calm water, clouds of black smoke issuing from every funnel; I have never seen the sublimity of a steam war-fleet more impressively rendered. Longueville has perfect mastery of his materials, and can do all he wants to do in etching; but his work is not of first-rate excellence as art, because he has no aspirations beyond it, and little subtlety or variety of feeling. Without approaching greatness, he is the cleverest marine-etcher living.

Veyrassat has not succeeded well in any large plate that I have seen of his, but he has published a set of ten small etchings, several of which are very delightful. Here is one of them, a pair of boat-horses with a boy. It is charming and free in manner, and in style and subject fairly represents the series from which it is taken. I have no hesitation in recommending these little plates as true etchings, of a quality superior to much modern work of a far more pretentious character.

It would be unjust to omit an etcher of such masculine power as Bracquemond; but though he has great energy and a manly grasp of things, I do not perceive in his work any of the tenderness and delicacy which are always essential to the ideal of an artist. Though his manual skill is great, he does not always etch upon right principles, because he does not see things in their relation to each other. For instance, if he has to draw wild fowl amongst aquatic plants, a sort of subject he likes, he will draw each individual wild duck or teal without apparently thinking about its pictorial relation to the others, and carry out the same principle with every individual plant in his foreground. Hence he etches in a way quite

different from the great manner, which is always based upon synthetic selection. Bracquemond sent me lately some specimens of a new process in etching, upon which he has been experimenting for some time past. The artist draws with pen and ink on the bare copper, then lays his ground and steeps the plate in water; the water reaches the ink and dissolves it, so that the ground is easily removed by slight friction where the ink lines have passed. After this the plate is bitten in the usual manner. I once attempted this process, but without success. Bracquemond's experiments have resulted in almost perfect imitations of pen-drawings; but since etching, as usually practised, is an art very superior to pen-drawing (see page 5), I have not thought it necessary to trouble myself or the reader with farther investigations of the matter.

If I were to speak of such an artist as Queyroy without reference to the especial qualities of the aquafortist, my notice of him would be almost wholly favourable. He is entirely simple and sincere, sometimes truly pathetic and affecting, and quite free from the slightest trace of charlatanism. I wish he had more grace and freedom of line, more delicacy of the kind which belongs to the genuine etchers, more lightness and ease, more power of selection and emphasis, and greater vivacity of manner. His sympathy is right and earnest, which is much; but etching is the most exacting of all the linear arts, and a faculty delicate enough for lithography or the lead-pencil may not be quite delicate enough for the etching-needle. The truth is, that Queyroy is somewhat heavy and prosaic, notwithstanding his good qualities, and therefore not yet a noble etcher. His principal works are albums with the following titles: "Les Paysans," "Les Rues et Maisons du Vieux Blois," "Le Vieux Moulins," "Le Vieux Vendôme," and a set of illustrations of types and costumes, "En Bourbonnais." He intends to devote the summer of 1868 to the illustration of the noble old city of Autun, where he will find excellent material.

GIOVANNI BELLINI PITTORE

Frédéric Désiré Hillemacher, who was born at Brussels in 1811, and has since been naturalized as a Frenchman, is one of the most industrious of modern etchers. The head of Bellini, published in this book, is a fair example of his skill. I have always liked this portrait so well that I had hoped, on farther acquaintance with the work of Hillemacher, to find original plates of considerable value, but on farther investigation I discovered that his labours had been almost invariably devoted to the interpretation of other men's work, which in a book on etching, as an independent art, could scarcely come within my province. There is a delicacy in his little illustrations to Molière quite equal to much of the best work of the English Club; and few artists, in miniature-etching, have used the needle with greater spirit and vivacity. M. Hillemacher now occupies himself in editing the works of Molière, with the original orthography and an etching at the head of every act: this will be the artist's masterpiece, and may be recommended as an admirable example of the application of etching to book-illustration. Hillemacher has etched an immense number of portraits. He is what is called an "amateur," being professionally occupied as a director of canal companies.

It is about thirteen years since Théodore Valério first went to Hungary and the Danubian Principalities in search of original types and costumes not yet abandoned. Living alternately in the mansions of great nobles and the huts of the peasantry, he found material of inexhaustible interest, and in quantity not less inexhaustible. What delighted him most was the strongly marked character of the human types, and especially their nobleness and natural grandeur of manner. After working long and industriously in these regions he returned to Paris by way of Berlin, and met with warm encouragement from the late King of Prussia, and from a still greater personage, Alexander Humboldt, who took the greatest interest in Valério's work from the ethnological point of view. During the Crimean War

Valério received a Government appointment, which gave him the best opportunities for studying the Oriental army at his leisure; and during the siege of Sebastopol he made seven hundred sketches and forty water-colour drawings. After all this experience Valério found in the etching-needle a fitting instrument for the still wider publication of what he had noted in his travels, and undertook a series of etchings which are of the greatest interest as studies of human nature in lands where nobleness and valour are still clearly *visible* qualities, and therefore far more attractive to an artist than they can be in a country like France, where usages common to all have tamed the haughtiness of proud and bold men into habitual anxiety to please. It is natural that with the delight in his *subjects* which Valério's energetic travelling proves, he should have paid rather more attention to subject than to art: this is the inevitable consequence of a very earnest desire to illustrate anything outside of art, as, for instance, national character. Exactly in the same way a landscape-painter who was too much interested in geology would be rather apt to forget artistic aims at the Giant's Causeway or the Puy de Dôme. But Valério etches with skill and freedom, and the objection to his work applies rather to the general *ordonnance* of his subjects than to any want of skill with the needle.

Perhaps the reader is not personally acquainted with French sheep. I, who write this, am. No animals in the world are so tame and so gregarious as these. They like to stand in rows when they feed, and it is highly curious to see how steadily they keep abreast, like soldiers. I have watched them often and long, and been continually struck by the curious aspect of their congregated backs, always so close together that a child might run upon them.

Of all representations of a French flock that I know, an etching by M. Chaigneau, "Moutons en Plaine," is the truest. It is, at the same time, the most poetical. The figure of the shepherdess is almost sublime in her

E. Chauvel

LE TRAVAIL.

simple dignity, as she glances over her sheep. The landscape, without being minute, is grand and true; the play of light in the corn being very beautiful. There are other plates by Chaigneau worth noticing, but this is the best.

The etching by Chauvel, in this book, has a quality not very common in second-rate work,—perfect freshness and unity of aspect. I by no means defend the drawing of the trees, and know very well that the chiaroscuro is somewhat weak and ineffectual, but give the plate for its one great merit of unity. It is so simple and straightforward that young etchers may find it a good model in respect of this particular virtue. Chauvel has been a laborious etcher; he has produced much, and the sort of ease and decision visible here is the fruit of considerable experience.

It is unnecessary to prolong this chapter by farther mention of minor etchers. Some celebrated painters have attempted etching: Eugène Delacroix has executed a few plates of very indifferent quality, and Meissonier is known as an aquafortist by one or two small etchings, more remarkable for firmness and precision than for the high qualities of the art. Among the rarest contributors to the Society may be mentioned A. Gautier, whose two small plates, illustrating "Le Travail" (a man sawing wood, and a woman ironing linen), are unpretending and sincere, though not yet masterly work. The latter is printed in this volume, the plate is now rather worn, and has lost vigour in the blacks, but it retains the charms of naturalness and simplicity which induced me to procure it.

ETCHING AND ETCHERS.

BOOK IV.

THE DUTCH AND OTHER SCHOOLS.

CHAPTER I.

ALBERT DURER.

DURER was so magnificent a master in the powers and qualities he cared for and aimed at, that it is the more necessary to remember the limitations of his art. His drawing is, in its way, superb; his management of the burin above criticism; his chiaroscuro quite arbitrary and false; his knowledge of local colour apparently slight, and never certainly to be depended upon; his aërial perspective null.

We know Durer by his engravings mainly; but he could etch, and was a true etcher, though he practised the art little. Two of his etchings are described below.

The mechanical perfection of his handicraft as a line-engraver does not concern us here, and must be passed with this simple mention, though it is a tempting subject. But Durer's mind concerns us; and admirable as was the perfection of his manual work, he does not owe his greatness to that, but to mental originality and force.

He was one of the most grave artists who ever lived. His gravity went so far that he could do things which, in a jesting age like ours, would have been criticised and caricatured without mercy. For instance, imagine what would be said if an English academician painted "Samson killing the Lion" as Durer designed that subject, or even such compositions as his "Knight and Lady," or the

"Satyr and Lady behind the Shield with the Death's Head," or the woodcut of the "Visitation." These, in their way, are all truly great art, but great art of a kind which would not be possible in this century, on account of our highly developed sense of the ridiculous, and our levity.

There is a quality in all Durer's work which gives it inexhaustible interest; it always makes us feel that we have not yet got to the bottom of it, that there are meanings in it deeper than any we have yet read, and that closer and more intelligent study will be rewarded by farther knowledge and fuller enjoyment. His intense seriousness, his powerful and somewhat morbid imagination, gave him a tendency to philosophical and poetical suggestion somewhat beyond the range of graphic art. It is easy to propose solutions of Durer's enigmas, but what he really intended, in some of his most elaborate plates, will perhaps remain for ever a mystery. Who knows what was in Durer's mind when he engraved the "Great Horse"? Certainly, his purpose was not simply the designing of a muscular quadruped.

It would not be difficult for a writer who, for many years, has loved and studied the noble work of Durer, to occupy several pages with the expression of his long-accumulating thought; but any elaborate study of this master would be out of place here, because it would have to be based upon his engravings, and not upon his etchings. Even of the etchings themselves it would be an affectation to say very much beyond this, that they are right in workmanship and as good in conception as the artist's other religious pieces. It was not in the conception of scenes of sacred history that Durer far surpassed his contemporaries.

St. Jerome.—The saint is seated in a rocky place, with a book before him on a rude table made with a board placed upon stones; there is a lion at his feet and a little water. (Dated, 1512.)

The Virgin and Child.—The Virgin is seated on the edge of a rude trough filled with hay or straw. To her left is an old man with a long beard, and behind her are three figures—a woman and two men. The reader will find a very rich impression of this etching in the British Museum, the *upper* proof on page 18 of the Durer volume there.

CHAPTER II.

REMBRANDT.

EVERY art has its great representative master, and the representative etcher is Rembrandt. He was so constituted, and he so trained himself, as to become, in his maturity, the most consummate aquafortist who has hitherto appeared. There is, however, a difficulty in writing about him which does not present itself in the case of less celebrated artists; he has been made the subject of such unlimited eulogy, that the sincere expression of critical appreciation must seem faint and pale after the ardours of genuine or affected fanaticism. Rembrandt is what the French call a god of art. The phrase sounds a little blasphemous to English ears; but, whether blasphemous or not, it describes with perfect accuracy the relation of certain famous artists towards their admirers. Rembrandt and one or two others are in a very strict sense the gods of connoisseurs, and the kind of homage they receive is not critical, but has the nature of worship or adoration. After that the critic has a discouraging task before him: for, however loud his praise, it is inaudible in the unceasing chorus of traditional hymn-singing; and however mild the expression of a doubt, it is likely to be resented as a species of atheism. False enthusiasm of all kinds is often considerably noisier than true enthusiasm; and it is not easy for a critic, whose admiration is only based on careful study of the works of an artist, to emulate the ardour of those who have never studied

him at all.* Considering, therefore, that nothing in the way of phrase-making can be expected to equal what has been accomplished already in honour of the name of Rembrandt, the present writer abandons the rhetoric of eulogy to more adventurous and enterprising authors, and confines himself to a simple analysis of Rembrandt's qualities and powers.

Technical skill is not the highest gift of an artist, but it is his most necessary accomplishment, for without it he cannot worthily realize his conceptions, however elevated. This is a truism, and has been said before in various ways, but it may be well to say it in this place once again, because Rembrandt holds his supreme rank primarily on technical grounds. Let us, for the present, set aside the question of his intellectual power, and reserve considerations of taste, inquiring simply whether he could really etch, or whether his work, like that of many other clever painters who have etched, is foreign to the true genius of the art.

A great French painter gave this counsel to his pupils: "*Ébauchez toujours.*" Our English art language is so limited that we cannot translate the word *ébaucher*, which means the preparatory brushing-in of a picture; but what the painter intended to recommend was the practice of carrying forward the picture, always on the same principle of comprehensive sketching, until at last it reached a sufficient completion, being brought to it insensibly, as it were, and without any fixed intention of finish; the finish coming of itself after much sketching upon and within sketching. The advice was excellent, even as addressed to painters; but etchers need a like belief even more urgently. An etching should always be conceived purely as a sketch, and what people call a "finished" etching ought to be nothing more than

* The enthusiasm about the classical writers (not merely Latin and Greek, but of all countries) is always loudest in the case of persons who read them little or not at all, on the same principle, it may be supposed, which makes religious bigotry most energetic in those who expend little energy in the direction of moral effort.

a sketch carried farther. Rembrandt was always technically safe, because he never lost hold of the idea of the sketch, and his most laboured work is still strictly conceived on the principles of sketching.

At this stage in our study of the great master it may be well to pause, for there exists a widely-spread misapprehension of the nature of a sketch. Sketching is held to be an easy form of artistic expression, because it is rapid and apparently slight when done, but the knowledge required for a sketch is as great as that needed for a "finished" drawing, the only difference being that, the slighter and swifter the expression, the greater is the necessity for comprehensiveness and selection. It is only the most accomplished artists who, in any true sense, can be said to sketch at all, because it is only when the facts of nature are thoroughly known that the most necessary ones can be selected from the mass. One of the common illusions of dilettantism is the belief that the talent of the sketcher is easily accessible, but the amateur is just as likely to rival the finish of Van Eyck as the liberty of Rembrandt.

Rembrandt *always* sketched, and his most finished work is sketching carried forwards.

The adherence to this principle is philosophically right and defensible, on the ground that, whenever we see comprehensively, we see nature itself as a more or less advanced sketch, never in perfect completion. When we lose artistic comprehensiveness and become analytic,—as, for instance, when we examine the buckling of harness before starting for a drive,—we do not see the object as a sketcher would, but at such times we do not see at all in the artistic sense; we are, for the time being, blind.

The next notable fact about Rembrandt is, that he saw and etched with the most various *degrees* of abstraction, so that his sketching passes from the very slightest and rudest *croquis* to what is popularly accepted as finished work. All these degrees of abstraction he had constantly

at command, and used them sometimes in the same plate, passing with subtle gradation from one to the other, as it suited him, and so leading us to dwell upon what he considered best worth our study.

So that if we take the whole series of the plates of Rembrandt, we shall find separate illustrations of sketching in all degrees of abstraction; and, also, if we take certain particular plates, we shall find in each of them a concentration of these various interpretations of nature; but, however near the apparent approach to "finish," the most elaborate work is still pure sketching.

Another point which distinguishes Rembrandt from many inferior aquafortists, is his manly use, on due occasion, of the frank etched line. He knew the beauty and the value of it, and was so far from trying to dissimulate it in deference to popular taste, that he laid it boldly and bare wherever he saw the need of it, even in his most careful and elaborate performances. There is only one Englishman, Haden, who has used the line in this direct, effectual way, and Rembrandt taught him. Turner could use it, also, but he looked always to mezzotint to help him out. Of modern Frenchmen, Lalanne, Appian, Chifflart, Jongkind, and Daubigny employ the free line with various degrees of success, but no one has ever yet used it like Rembrandt; and in this respect even the greatest of the old masters are feeble in comparison with him—all, except Vandyke.

He was very various in method, so that some amateurs, in ignorance of the usual processes of the art, have attributed to him secrets peculiar to himself. There is no evidence, however, that Rembrandt did more than employ the processes known to all etchers, and the peculiarity of his work was not a peculiarity of method, but a surpassing excellence of skill. So little is generally known about etching, that men who have a reputation for connoisseurship are sometimes unacquainted with the details of practice, so that the little artifices of method, which any

one may learn who will take the trouble, appear to them mysterious and inexplicable. It may be well to guard the reader against a mistake to which he may be exposed in reading French criticisms of Rembrandt, in which some impressions of his plates are said to be in the *manière noire*, a phrase commonly employed for mezzotint. Rembrandt never engraved in mezzotint, but he sometimes, in printing a plate, left ink on its surface so as to give a certain richness which bears some resemblance to mezzotint; and the *manière noire* of the French writers refers, in the case of Rembrandt, simply to this way of printing.

It is not always easy to say positively of small portions of Rembrandt's work, whether it was done with the etching-needle or the dry-point; and this proves an extraordinary mastery of the latter instrument, which in less skilful hands cannot approach the freedom of the needle. In these cases the way to ascertain the fact is by reference to the earliest proofs, before Rembrandt had removed his bur.

The criticism most interesting to general readers is that which refers to mental rather than technical characteristics, and it would be wrong not to attempt some estimate of Rembrandt as a mind studying nature and humanity. He was a robust genius, with keen powers of observation, but little delicacy or tenderness of sentiment, and he lacked the feminine element which is said to be necessary to poets. He understood certain classes of men quite thoroughly, and drew them with the utmost perspicacity—men with whom his robust nature had sympathy. He had an extraordinary apprehension of natural dignity and majesty, proving thereby the true grandeur of his own mind, for it is only minds of a very high order that see the grandeur of men who enjoy little worldly rank and consideration. Rembrandt had little sensitiveness, it seems, as regards the delicate beauty of young women, but he understood—and this is rarer—the venerableness of some old ones. He drew a great many Biblical subjects, and

a few very immoral ones : whether he was religious or not is uncertain; it is possible that he might have availed himself of the Bible as a convenient repertory of material, full of fine artistic suggestion, and having the advantage of being universally known. On the other hand, though there is undeniable licentiousness in some of his etchings, his mind does not seem to have dwelt much upon subjects of that kind, and he took them probably merely because they came in his way, as incidents of human life—a state of feeling which the scrupulous reticence of our age may easily misinterpret. He cared very little for beauty and grace, despised prettiness, calmly tolerated all manner of hideousness, and admired nothing so much as a certain stern and manly grandeur, resulting from the combination of habits of reflection and much experience of the world.

The doctrine that great artists are the product of the circumstances that surround them, has been so much insisted upon of late, that the reader will easily see the applicability of it to Rembrandt as an etcher. The visible marks of character in the men he knew were so strongly traced, and their whole aspect so available for his purpose, that he had the advantage of continual study, even in the common intercourse of life. A Londoner in the nineteenth century misses this, unless he is a caricaturist, for the activity of modern existence is destructive of the kind of dignity which Rembrandt loved, and our costume is not compatible with any true grandeur of demeanour. A still worse evil than our fidgety activity and mean costume, is the want of clear individuality in our faces; we are trained in the repression of all visible feeling beyond a small range of polite and exceedingly mild emotions, so that our joy never gets beyond a smile of quiet satisfaction, nor may our sorrows command more than a gentle expression of regret. But Rembrandt lived in a time when people bore upon their faces a frank record, not only of recent feeling, but of all the intensity of the feelings that had moved the muscles and moulded the

physiognomy during the whole course of their lives, and he took the greatest delight in studying living records of this kind. The human interest of his work is, therefore, exceedingly great; and his portraits, especially, become for us living acquaintances. The same intensity of individual character is carried through his ideal subjects, and his imagination does not rest satisfied with anything less than personal knowledge of every individual man and woman in his etchings, even though of minor consequence in the action.

The reader who has not yet studied Rembrandt systematically, but wishes to do so, may conveniently prepare himself for the etchings themselves, by making himself familiar with the photographs from them, and the Catalogue of Charles Blanc, which is illustrated by forty plates of Flameng, the most spirited copies of etchings ever executed in such a considerable quantity, and with sustained excellence.

Since Rembrandt was a productive etcher it is wise to divide his work into classes, according to subject, and this has been done for us already by M. Charles Blanc. From these classes the student may select representative examples. Those described below are sufficient to give a very clear idea of the genius of Rembrandt, in its full variety of expression.

As the reader has just been recommended to avail himself of the assistance of photographs and copies, it may be well to say a few words as to their especial utility.

A photograph never fairly represents an etching, and is never, in any sense, a substitute for the original plate; but the forms are retained, though the brilliant quality of the work is in a great measure lost; and a set of photographs serve to remind us of the plates themselves, or to prepare us for the study of the originals, by making us at least familiar with their subjects and composition. The value of photography has been forced upon the writer's attention with especial effect, because it was at

one time proposed to illustrate this volume by means of photographs from the great etchers, but the quality of photographic reproductions generally was found so unreliable as to technical merits, that the plan was finally abandoned. When the photograph from an etching is placed side by side with the original, it is found wanting in clearness and purity of line; the lines occasionally fail where most delicate, and passages of close but still open shading are represented by something like a washed or blotted tint. On the other hand, no etched copy is to be absolutely relied upon, though some very wonderful imitations exist—imitations whose Chinese fidelity deceives all but the most accomplished connoisseurs. Notwithstanding these defects, photographs and etched copies may, however, be accepted for what they are worth, and used, not as substitutes for the originals, which should be studied in preference whenever the opportunity occurs, but as reminders and records. Flameng's copies are marvellous for their spirit and truth, and may be recommended as interpretations of the mind of Rembrandt.*

It is not necessary to repeat here what is known of Rembrandt's life; the reader will find details in M. Blanc's biography which will interest him, but our knowledge of Rembrandt's existence is not very complete. It is certain that he was passionately fond of art, and an eager collector, being willing to buy art as well as to sell it. He had a keen knowledge of human nature, and knew how to catch connoisseurs by the bait of rarity, making different states of plates on purpose to gratify them in this respect. It appears to be positively known that he had a printing-press

* Here is the title of M. Blanc's Catalogue of Rembrandt's works with Flameng's illustrations :—

"L'Œuvre complet de Rembrandt, décrit et commenté par M. Charles Blanc, ancien Directeur des Beaux-Arts. Catalogue raisonné de toutes les Eaux-fortes du Maître et de ses Peintures, orné de Bois gravés et de quarante Eaux-fortes tirées à part et rapportées dans le texte. 2 vols. Paris: L. Guérin, éditeur. Dépôt et vente à la librairie Théodore Morgand, 5, rue Bonaparte."

in his own studio, and took proofs with his own hands, as every true etcher ought to do.

The value of his etchings has increased greatly since his death, and never more than during the last few years. A single copy of his whole work could not be brought together for less than twelve or fourteen thousand pounds —even supposing the possibility of making a complete collection.

The plate of "Christ healing the Sick" was called the Hundred Guilder Print, because Rembrandt sold a copy of it for that sum. At M. de Burgy's sale, in Amsterdam, in 1755, an impression, in the first state, before the diagonal lines on the neck of the ass, sold for 84 guilders (7*l.*). This afterwards became the property of Mr. Barnard, at whose sale (London, 1798) it was bought by Mr. G. Hibbert for 33*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* Mr. Hibbert's collection was sold in 1809, and Mr. Esdaile bought this impression for 41*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* When Mr. Esdaile's collection, in its turn, came to the hammer, this impression fetched 231*l.*, Mr. Holford being the purchaser. Another impression was bought by Mr. Smith, at Baron Verstolk's sale, in Amsterdam, 1847, for less than 140*l.* and sold, not long ago, at Mr. Charles Price's sale, to Mr. Palmer, for 1,180*l.* An impression in the usual state was sold at Mr. Carew's sale, in 1835, for 16*l.* 10*s.*; at M. Debois's sale, in Paris, 1844, for 112*l.*; and at that of Mr. Johnson (London, 1860) for 160*l.*

One of the best instances of the money-value which attaches to mere curiosity quite independently of art, is Rembrandt's "Sleeping Dog." He originally etched this in one corner of a plate measuring about four inches and a quarter wide by two and a half high, and afterwards cut it down to three and a quarter wide by one and a half high. Only one impression, in the first state, is known, which sold at Mr. Hibbert's sale, in 1809, for 1*l.* 10*s.* The Duke of Buckingham subsequently obtained it for 6*l.*; and at his sale, in 1834, it brought 61*l.* In 1841 the

British Museum gave 120*l.* for it. The difference between this copy and an ordinary one is exactly six square inches of white paper, so that the British Museum actually gave a little under twenty pounds per square inch for some blank paper which Rembrandt considered *injurious* to his etching, since he diminished the size of the copper. The essential point, as a matter of curiosity, was that this white paper should be *within the plate-mark.* This may be taken as a typical example of that purchasing for curiosity which is so distinct from the love of art. If the size of the copper had been beneficial to the etching, Rembrandt would not have reduced it. Artistically, therefore, in Rembrandt's opinion, the needlessly large copper was a defect, and the first state not the best. But, in questions of price, curiosity always influences more than art, and an artistic defect will be extravagantly paid for, if only it is a proof of rarity; especially if, as in this instance, it is connected with some odd circumstance, of a character sufficiently trivial to awaken the interest of persons whose love of art is languid.

SACRED SUBJECTS.

Hagar dismissed by Abraham (Blanc, 3; Bartsch, 30; Claussin, 37; Wilson, 37).—The references to the regular catalogues will save the space that would be occupied by descriptions, and allow us to devote the whole of these pages to pure criticism.

This is one of the most perfectly delicate of all Rembrandt's etchings. The sureness of the faint thin lines on which the expression of the faces chiefly depends, the masterly reservation of reflections and half-lights in open shading, the opportune omission of labour where omission was better than toil, justify our admiration. Observe the thoroughly characteristic drawing of Sarah's old hands and grimly satisfied face; the strokes are so

few that you may count them, and so thin that it needs clear sight even to see them. The face of Abraham is just as good, and the beard is indicated with a dozen strokes towards the edge of it, the rest being left to the imagination.

Abraham's Sacrifice (Blanc, 6; Bartsch, 35; Claussin, 36; Wilson, 39).—Independently of its very fine composition, and the magnificent style in the drawing of Abraham and the angel, this plate may be especially recommended as a fine example of the free etched line, which is everywhere perfectly frank and full of vital energy.

Jacob and Laban, sometimes called *Three Oriental Figures* (Blanc, 7; Bartsch, 118; Claussin, 120; Wilson, 122).—This is one of those plates of Rembrandt, more numerous than is generally supposed, of which the original coppers are still in existence. It is far from being the best or the most important of these plates, but it seemed, on the whole, the one most eligible for introduction in a work of this kind, and is here presented to the reader. That there may be no want of clearness on this point, it may be well to say, in the most positive manner, that the etching given herewith is not a copy, but an original Rembrandt. I fully satisfied myself of its originality, by a minute comparison with the impression in the Imperial Library at Paris; a comparison in which, not only every line was separately examined, but even the accidental dots and scratches on the copper. Well knowing, however, that it is a constant custom amongst half-informed connoisseurs, to deny the authenticity of any plate which happens to be printed upon new paper, I was glad to have the opportunity of backing my own opinion by the authority of M. Charles Blanc, which, on a point of this kind, no one is likely to call in question. The fact is, that a considerable number of Rembrandt's original coppers are still in material existence, though the greater part of them have been so much deteriorated by wear, and so

Rembrandt f. 1641

injured by retouchings and rebitings, as to be artistically valueless. The most delicate plates have, of course suffered most, and consequently it was not possible for me to offer any specimen of such work as that which I have just praised in the dismissal of Hagar. In this plate of "Jacob and Laban," the only part which has suffered serious injury is the black shade in the doorway, which is considerably paler than in the earliest impressions. Close lines always give way soonest in the printing, and a modern *crevé* can scarcely be trusted, if not steeled, up to a hundred copies; but when the lines are kept well apart, and not too shallow, they will yield large editions without material injury. The necessary conditions in presenting an original Rembrandt to the buyers of this book were, that the workmanship should be coarse, and the subject unpopular; because delicate work is soon worn away, and popularity demands exhausting editions. All the popular plates of Rembrandt which still exist, are now in the most advanced stage of consumption; they are even more than that, they are ghosts. The "Jacob and Laban" is not a fine etching: I have no particular admiration for it, but at any rate it has the respectable quality of substantial existence, and is not, like its nobler brethren, a melancholy example of the most extreme exhaustion.

The Presentation in the Temple (Blanc, 23; Bartsch, 50; Claussin, 54; Wilson, 55).—There are three "Presentations in the Temple," but this may be easily known as the larger, upright one; it is further distinguished by the French critics as the one *en manière noire*, by which they mean that the plate has been heavily inked. The brilliancy of the sacerdotal vestments is rendered here with a power so extraordinary, that the plate is a great technical feat. The lines are coarse and rude, but so entirely synthetic and intelligent in their arrangement, that the splendour of gold, and jewels, and embroidery is fully suggested to the imagination. The high priest, who is standing, is

one of the most imposing figures amongst all the creations of Rembrandt, who had a keen appreciation of sacerdotal dignity and magnificence.

Repose in Egypt (Blanc, 31; Bartsch, 58; Claussin, 62; Wilson, 63).—This plate is so very slightly bitten as to be exceedingly pale, but M. Charles Blanc believes that this feebleness was intentional. Great artists, in their designs, have often drawn whole pages of such extreme delicacy and paleness that their work is half invisible, and its finest passages to be apprehended by the imagination alone. It is a kind of artistic caprice, like the faint playing of a musician when he imitates music in the remote distance. A plate in this condition is in a very good state to be carried forward in pure dry-point.

Jesus Christ preaching (Blanc, 39; Bartsch, 67; Claussin, 71; Wilson, 71).—One of the finest of Rembrandt's sacred subjects, and, in its original state, one of the most simple in execution. The copper belonged to Norblin, the engraver, who laboriously retouched it. At Norblin's death it was sold to Mr. Colnaghi. As an example of genuine etcher's work an early impression is unexceptionable.

The Return of the Prodigal Son (Blanc, 43; Bartsch, 91; Claussin, 95; Wilson, 96).—Here, again, is one of the existing coppers. I had the opportunity of giving it in this book, but was deterred by the frightful hideousness of the principal figures. Rembrandt may have desired to indicate that the unfortunate youth had become swinish from companionship with swine, but, surely, there could be no especial reason for the ugliness of his father. There is, however, much dramatic truth, and even some tenderness, in the arrangement of the group.

Christ healing the Sick (Blanc, 49; Bartsch, 74; Claussin, 78; Wilson, 78).—This is the famous etching known as "The Hundred Guilder Print," and of which a single impression has been sold for the enormous sum of 1,180*l.* There are several other plates by Rembrandt at least equal to this in artistic quality, but from its large dimen-

sions and the delicacy of its finish, as well as the impressiveness of the subject, and the force with which the scene is realized, "The Hundred Guilder Print" is usually considered the most important work of the master; and the unprecedented sum which has been lately given for it will only tend to confirm the supremacy of its position. No etching was ever better finished as true etchers understand finish. The labour is by no means equal throughout, but is skilfully expended where most required, and economized where it could only have interfered with the concentration of the thought. The realism that pervades all that Rembrandt ever did, does not even here give place to any vain attempt at style, and yet the work has style of its own kind, though not in the narrow classical sense. The subject is one with which we have been rendered too familiar, by many artists, for it to exercise its full power on the imagination; and it requires great effort in the modern mind, detached as it is from the idea of the miraculous, to realize the actual presence of a teacher who could enforce his doctrine by relieving his hearers from their heaviest personal calamities. We must try, however, to sympathise with their eager hope and grateful rejoicing, if we would understand the expression on all these expectant faces.

There is a good deal of dry-point work, and towards the left Rembrandt took care to remove the bur, which destroyed the balance of the chiaroscuro. The market value of an impression in the first state, before Rembrandt had improved and completed the plate, is, of course, much greater than that of a perfect copy, Rembrandt's opinion being held of slight importance by connoisseurship, in comparison with the merit of rarity and the evidence of an early impression. There is a curious logical fallacy involved in the anxiety for *evidence* that an impression is an early one. Why are early impressions valued especially at all? Because they are supposed to be of better quality than later ones. But if quality is the object,

what is the necessity for evidence? Is not quality its own evidence? Connoisseurship first seeks early impressions for their quality, and then distrusts its own judgment as to the very thing it seeks, and so is obliged to look for marks by which an early impression may be known. For instance, in the case of this very etching, connoisseurs tell the first state by the absence of certain diagonal lines on the neck of the ass.

Descent from the Cross by Torchlight (Blanc, 58; Bartsch, 83; Claussin, 87; Wilson, 88).—Although the great "Descent from the Cross" is much more generally known, and may be considered, in a certain sense, more sublime, I have an especial liking for this; the work is so right and manly, and the composition so natural and yet so full of art. The way in which the sheet is thrown upon the bier, and the masculine indications of its folds, are a lesson for our modern etchers. If the value of such work as this had been rightly understood by the modern English and Germans, they would have avoided half their errors.

The Three Crosses (Blanc, 53; Bartsch, 78; Claussin, 81; Wilson, 81).—In the short chapters of the First Book, I spoke of frankness and passion as necessary elements in great etching, and of speed as a quality in itself desirable, when not obtained at the cost of necessary modulations in line. This etching of "The Three Crosses" is, of all Rembrandt's important plates, the most passionate, the most frank, and the most swift. Large as it is, the composition is nothing more—or, would it not be better to say that it is nothing less?—than a rapid memorandum of a true vision; one of those visions seen only by men of great imaginative endowments. So far as we may presume to speculate on the operation of these mysterious and rare powers, we may infer, from the extraordinary energy of the manipulation and absolute disdain of popular requirements, that the one object of Rembrandt in taking this great copper was to fix his vision for ever, without regard to anything but the sublime verity of the transcript.

The plate afterwards underwent very rough treatment at his hands; much of the early work was effaced, and several afterthoughts were added; which changes of intention only serve to prove the ungovernable ardour of the first inspired and passionate hour. Rembrandt was in the habit of keeping coppers by him ready varnished, and I have little doubt that in this instance the plate was ready to his hand when the light from heaven came. Many a reader may have lost patience with me when I occupied whole pages with purely technical considerations, but the entire value of this magnificent plate depends upon a technical facility—the ease and freedom with which the etching-point glides upon the copper, at any speed and in any direction. It is certain that if Rembrandt had been set to record his conception with the burin, he must either have restrained his passion whilst the slow tool ploughed its painful way, or renounced his task as hopeless.

The Death of the Virgin (Blanc, 70; Bartsch, 100; Claussin, 103; Wilson, 105).—Every lover of art comes, in time, to have private predilections which he cannot always readily account for and explain. Thus, of all the plates of Rembrandt, "The Death of the Virgin" is the one that fascinates and moves me most. In all the qualities of art there are at least four of Rembrandt's etchings which fully equal this; yet not one of them absorbs me so completely. The solemnity of fast approaching death, the gravity of the stately high-priest, and the calm physician; the sorrow of others present, the pale face upon the pillow, and the helpless hands upon the counterpane,—are elements of a scene which renews itself too frequently ever to lose its interest. In the upper air of the lofty room, angels wait for the spirit which the nations will adore as the Queen of Heaven; and the scene has a grandeur more than royal, for it has the sublimity of art. Considered as etching, the work is so sound and right, so various in degrees of finish, and so masterly in choice and direction of line, that "The Death of the Virgin"

may be taken as one of the great typical examples of what etching may be, and ought to be. If the reader would give half an hour to a fine impression of this plate, he would understand for ever after the painful and almost indignant feelings with which we hear men depreciate etching in the vanity of their superciliousness.

ALLEGORIES AND FANCIES.

Youth surprised by Death (Blanc, 79; Bartsch, 109; Claussin, 111; Wilson, 113).—The figure of the young man in this exquisite etching is by far the most elegant of all Rembrandt's creations; indeed, perhaps, the only one which has, in any marked degree, the character of elegance at all. There is a singular delicacy in the whole of the plate, very notably in the hair and head-dress of the women. It has been beautifully copied by Flameng.

A Lion-hunt (Blanc, 87; Bartsch, 115; Claussin, 117; Wilson, 119).—A rapid and hasty sketch full of fire and spirit, and curiously resembling in its peculiar inspiration the ideas of Eugène Delacroix.

The Bathers (Blanc, 117; Bartsch, 195; Claussin, 192; Wilson, 192).—Of course, no artist is to be judged by his worst productions; but Rembrandt is so great that he can well afford to be frankly criticised. He seems to have been absolutely indifferent to the beauty of the naked figure, but he never went farther than this in the recording of its hideousness and degradation. We might compare these men to gorillas or baboons, but they are more repulsive; because the ideal of the baboon does not involve the beautiful, whereas the ideal of man reaches to the Apollo Belvedere. What sort of satisfaction Rembrandt could find in the sketching of these pitiable objects, is a mystery. They have not even life enough to enjoy their bath like men, but are as miserable and shivering as they are shapeless.

THE BEGGARS.

Rembrandt etched about twenty-five subjects of beggars, several of which are exceedingly felicitous and curiously picturesque. As the plates of some of these subjects still exist, they are sold at low prices; but, although the lines of one or two that I have examined are certainly Rembrandt's own lines, they have been apparently rebitten, to make them last longer. Of course, when a plate has been rebitten by other hands than those of the etcher himself, it can no longer be considered a strictly original work. The direction of the lines is what the artist intends it to be, but not their depth.

The reader will find several fine copies of Rembrandt's "Beggars" in M. Blanc's Catalogue. One of the finest, in some respects, is No. 145, "Mendiants, Homme et Femme." Only two impressions of it are known to exist: one in the Cabinet at Paris, the other in the Museum of Amsterdam. The plate was a failure, and Rembrandt probably destroyed it; but though the face of the nearer figure is a blot, and though the execution generally bears the same relation to common drawing that the almost illegible manuscript of an excited author bears to the rounded pothooks of a schoolboy, still it is very grand work. Another very fine beggar is No. 149, "Gueux à gros Ventre." Observe the masterly economy of labour in the cloak and boots; the boots especially are splendid examples of fine swift treatment of costume.

ACADEMICAL SUBJECTS.

There are about a dozen etchings of the naked figure by Rembrandt. Some of these are very common, as the plates belong to M. Bernard, of Paris, who still prints editions of them. The naked man seated on the ground (Blanc, 160; Ba. 196; Cl. 193; W. 193) is

a very good piece of evidence as to Rembrandt's matter-of-fact interpretation. It is simple realism, quite devoid of aspiration. The model was a poor one, with no form, and Rembrandt seems to have felt no impatience, but to have copied the bad shapes quite contentedly. He accepted ugliness without repugnance. The naked woman whose feet are in water (Blanc, 164) is an instance of bad form of another kind. The young man had no form because he was meagre; this woman has none because she is fat: both etchings are as repulsive as photographs of ill-chosen models. And yet these two reasons are not the ultimate statement of the matter, for there is a lean ideal and a fat ideal; there is a leanness which has a spiritual beauty, and a fulness which has a sensual and material beauty; the early Italian painters knew the first, and Rubens knew the second, but Rembrandt knew neither. Yet he *had* an ideal, but we need not look for it in his studies of the naked figure, lean or fat; his ideal was not corporeal, but mental, and is to be found in his best portraits, and in many personages in his religious subjects, who are as personal and individual as portraits.

The "Diana at the Bath" (Bl. 165; Ba. 201; C. 198; W. 198) is little better, in point of form, than the woman with her feet in the water, but the figure is well poised, and most admirably drawn, technically. This is by far the finest of all Rembrandt's naked figures, much finer than the Antiope, for instance, though the pose of the Antiope is good, if the forms are not.

PORTRAITS.

It appears to be very difficult to etch a good portrait, if we are to judge by the rarity of successful attempts. There are scarcely any modern etched portraits worth mentioning, and very few older ones, except those of Rembrandt and Vandyke. Rembrandt owed something

of his success in portraits to constant practice on the best of all models—himself. He etched his own portrait more than thirty times over, in various dresses—an amount of egotism for which any modern etcher would incur the most severe reprobation of reviewers. He had a picturesque physiognomy, and was as good a subject as any he was likely to find; nor have we the right to blame an egotism which, in his case, was purely artistic, and very far removed from any vulgar sentiment of vanity. Rembrandt knew that he was a good subject, and found that in this instance the model readily complied with the requirements of the artist; so he often sat for hours before his looking-glass, and etched the keen, plain visage he saw in it. He etched his old mother seven or eight times, and his wife half as often: the old woman had a capital face, and her illustrious son, then young and obscure, drew it with the utmost intelligence and affection. His early portrait of her (Bl. 193; Ba. 354; C. 343; W. 348) is one of the most perfect of all his works. He was twenty-two years old then, and already a great master-etcher. One might expatiate long on the firm and exquisite truth with which the wrinkled face has been studied, and yet the wrinkles are not mapped out in a servile Denner-like manner, but always largely interpreted with reference to expression and anatomy. See how they are accentuated on the temple as it passes into the shade; how the reflected lights are kept clear under the chin, where they have scarcely a perceptible breadth; how the few thin hairs are drawn with their wave of curl; how the half extinguished eye retains its remnant of calm light; how the placid lips, full of experience and quiet capacity of irony, meet in their sage reserve! There is another very fine portrait of the same old lady (Bl. 196; Ba. 345; C. 333; W. 339), an extraordinary *tour de force* in the rendering of an old woman's face, and technically remarkable for its translation of various local values of black in the veil and dress. Of Rembrandt's portraits of himself, two may be especially

mentioned,—the "Rembrandt with the Sabre and Aigrette" (Bl. 232; Ba. 23; C. 23; W. 23), and "Rembrandt appuyé" (Bl. 234; Ba. 21; C. 21; W. 21). The first of these two portraits gives us Rembrandt in his character of a lover of strange and picturesque costumes, of which he had a considerable collection; the other represents him, very probably, in the dress he usually wore, and is that from which most of us derive our idea of his person. He lived in an age when a man might dress picturesquely without being hooted or laughed at, and so indulged his artistic instincts very freely. No more picturesque scene can be imagined than the interior of Rembrandt's house, full of all things that his eyes desired: of arms, and carving, and porcelain, of rare tissues, of statues and busts, of pictures, of quaint furniture, of tapestries, and animals and plants, of spoils of earth and sea. In the midst of all these things sat that illustrious and immortal genius—sat, as we see him in this portrait, himself not less picturesque than the things around him, a masculine and robust man, knowing the aspects of life, and scrutinising all things with those sharp, penetrating eyes. What interested him most in the living world around him, was neither the loveliness of women, nor the grace of infancy, but the thoughtful faces of mature and intelligent men. Thus he drew Cornelius Ansloo, a celebrated preacher of those days; Asselyn, a painter of reputation; Ephraim Bonus, a physician; Clement de Jonghe, a famous publisher of prints; Janus Lutma, a well-known goldsmith; the Burgomaster Six, and other personages, in almost every instance remarkable for an appearance of strong understanding or venerable dignity which compels us to remember and respect them. It may have been a subtle flattery on the part of Rembrandt to give to his sitters a wise and meditative look, as other portraitists add beauty to the features, and dissimulate physical defects; but there was a sturdy frankness in Rembrandt's nature which inclines us rather to the belief that he would not have condescended even to

this delicate species of flattery, and that there existed in his models, at least, a strong suggestion of the qualities he attributed to them. The one rare merit of these portraits is that they never seem to lay traps for our admiration, and have no anxiety to please. The Burgomaster Six is reading quietly at his window, without a thought of the world beyond; Ephraim Bonus is thinking not of us, but of the patient whom he has just left upstairs; Uytenbogaert, the gold weigher, is entirely absorbed in his accounts. The difference between these portraits and too many modern ones is, that these have dignity without pretension, whereas the others have pretension without dignity. The execution is sometimes exceedingly marvellous, as, for instance, the modelling of the gold weigher's face, the moustache and imperial of old Haaring, and the eyebrow of Janus Lutma. Whenever the hands are given, as in the lesser Coppenol, the Ansloo, and the Lutma, they are drawn in a simple and direct way, but with singular attention to the character and constitution of the man. Whilst on the subject of execution, we cannot omit to mention the remarkable silvery beard worn by a nameless old man with a fur cap. It is nearly all done by suggestion and omission, but the fulness and softness of it are perfectly expressed. There is an art, very useful to etchers, by which the imagination of the spectator is made to do half the work; Rembrandt understood this, and often had recourse to it with much cunning. By telling you what the hairs are like on the left side of the beard, he makes you believe that you see hairs on the right, though in reality he gives you nothing there but a space of blank paper.

LANDSCAPES.

Though Rembrandt's draughtsmanship in the figure was often incorrect as to proportion, it was always scientific and based upon anatomical studies, which we know to have

been amongst the artist's valued and beloved pursuits. But he did not draw animals so well as men, nor trees so well as animals, and was, in short, much less scientific as a landscape-painter than as a master of the figure. We all know how the study of landscape has lingered behind the study of the human body; but, because many of the old masters brought to the execution of landscape-subjects that grand and governing *manner* which they had learned in another branch of art, and because they could, at least, express their sentiment, which was often noble and just, it has resulted that their reputation is considerable, notwithstanding the limitations of their knowledge, and that, even in these days of more accurate research and keener interest in the facts of the external world, these old masters still hold their ground against the rivalry of the most cultivated moderns. Thus Rembrandt's manner in landscape is better than that of any modern, except Turner and Haden; and our skilful English landscape-painters, notwithstanding their far greater knowledge of the various effects of nature, have a littleness of expression with the etching-needle which places them in a lower rank as artists. This is the distinction which connoisseurs universally feel, and which makes them often unjust towards the moderns, and blind to their especial superiorities. I have not space to enter into the difficult question of what constitutes greatness of style, but may say that Rembrandt had it, that Claude had it in another way, and that the success of Haden was mainly due to the possession of it.

Rembrandt etched about thirty landscapes of various degrees of finish. The slightest and most rapid of them all is the "Bridge of Six," of which Gersaint tells the following story:—Rembrandt used to visit his friend, the Burgomaster, at his country-house, and one day, dinner being served, behold there was no mustard! The Burgomaster sent his servant into the village to get some, and Rembrandt made a bet that, before the mustard was placed on the table, he would etch a plate. He etched this bridge,

which was visible from the dining-room window. The point of interest in this anecdote is that Rembrandt took a plate which was already varnished, and that he had several with him so prepared. An etcher ought always to have plates ready, because the trouble of grounding one may often prevent him from seizing a good opportunity. Another point proved by the story, is that Rembrandt etched from nature directly, not, perhaps, as a general rule, but at least that he had no objection to the practice. The "Bridge of Six" is a rapid and slight sketch of no especial merit or interest.

The reader will find, amongst the landscapes of Rembrandt, several very fine examples of the use of the dry-point. One of the finest is the "Landscape with the three Cottages" (Bl. 318), in which the bur is used with great power, though with an exaggeration of blackness. The same power, with the same exaggeration of rich blacks, may be found in other plates, especially in the "Bouquet de Bois" (Bl. 323), which is entirely engraved in dry-point. The "Landscape with the Tower" and the "Landscape with the Square Tower" (Nos. 324 and 319, in Blanc's Catalogue) are inspired by a very true landscape sentiment, and remain always in the memory. The "View of Omval" (Bl. 312) and the "Cottage with the Great Tree" (Bl. 326) are, perhaps, the finest examples of Rembrandt's masterly use of the needle in pure etching. The distances in both plates are remarkable for ease and simplicity of manner.

It is always, however, a mistake to attribute too much importance to manual skill in etching, or in any other of the great arts. When there is the true understanding of nature, and the true artistic sentiment, manual skill usually comes with practice, and the greatest artists never trouble themselves about it, warning their pupils against anxiety on that score. The distinction between the possession of manual skill and artistic genius is perfectly illustrated in the case of Flameng, the engraver who etched the wonderful copies from Rembrandt in M. Blanc's Catalogue.

I have no hesitation in saying that, in manual skill, Flameng is equal to Rembrandt, or to any etcher who ever lived; and yet I have not mentioned Flameng amongst French etchers, and have given a chapter to Daubigny, who is clumsiness itself in comparison with him. If Rembrandt had no higher claim on our consideration than mechanical ability with the point, he would not deserve mention in the records of an art whose glory is to spring directly from the mind.

CHAPTER III.

OSTADE AND BEGA.

THE repugnance which a refined modern gentleman, full of scholarly ideas and delicate sympathies, feels for the sort of humanity in which Ostade delighted, is strong enough in many instances to counterbalance all the technical qualities of the artist, and permanently repel the student. Ostade is not the only painter who has studied the habits of the peasantry: we have just seen that Rembrandt had a predilection for beggars, and the cottages of poor French farmers and labourers have, during the last few years, been the favourite studies of a class of painters by no means wanting in refinement, whose representative is Édouard Frère. Poverty is not a disqualification in the living subjects of a picture, and it is probable that the most refined artists, if obliged to choose between the interior of a rich tradesman's dining-room, or the interior of a Highland bothy, or a *chaumière* in the Morvan, would prefer the rough floor, and rude furniture, and simple inhabitants, to the carpets and mahogany, with their living accompaniments in broadcloth and fine silk. The poor do not repel us in Faed, or Frère, or Duverger, but they are very repulsive in Ostade and Bega,—so repulsive that we only endure them for the sake of the accomplished art.

In justice to ourselves, let us say that it is not the poverty which repels us, but the insensitiveness of the painter to all that is best amongst the poor: his incapacity

to recognise the true refinement of the rare and delicate natures which are disguised in mean apparel, his blindness to that beauty of character and countenance which is not aided by the arts of luxury. It is not to be believed that when Ostade and Bega studied the Dutch peasantry, the whole of the poor population of Holland was lost in bestiality, or that all the nobler feelings of human nature were utterly crushed out of it by the weight of care, like the juice from trodden grapes. And yet *their* peasants are universally mere animals, incapable of tenderness and thought, capable only of instinctive cares and besotted sensuality. The males pursue the females, the females give suck to their young, and the height of satisfaction is a swinish contentment in the fulness of the belly, and the apathy of the brain.

But, though on the human side there is nothing in this class of art to delight a modern public, it has often technical merits of a rare order. Ostade, especially, was a composer of remarkable ability, combining in the most felicitous way the two compositions of form and chiaroscuro. He was very inferior to Rembrandt in the variety of his execution. Rembrandt had many resources of method which were inaccessible to Ostade; but Ostade had always craft sufficient for his purpose, and could reach with great certainty the effects of light, the transparencies, the accentuations which gave him pleasure. It would be an interesting subject for speculation how an artistic accomplishment, which in its way certainly proves much visual and manual cultivation, was compatible with such deadness of the heart and such apathy of the intellect. Cases of this kind seem to prove that technical skill in the fine arts is possible without mental elevation, but they do not demonstrate the vanity of artistic culture generally. It was something for Ostade that he could at least see when his peasants composed well, and that he could enjoy the lights and shadows which gave a sort of sublimity to their habitations. An accomplishment may be worth

having, without working the miracle of giving nobility to a low nature, and we do not despise the classical languages and theology because they were the accomplishments of Dean Swift. The truth is, that not only artistic learning and skill, but all kinds of learning and skill, may be attained without much advance towards nobleness; but this does not prove them to be without a utility of their own. It is a fine thing to etch well, or read Greek well, or perform the sword exercise well, independently of moral results; and the sort of praise due to Ostade is that which may be justly accorded to those who excel in their particular craft.

Bega had a still lower nature than Ostade himself, and, though forcible and clever, had not even that kind of refinement which Ostade possessed. There is nothing of Bega's comparable to Ostade's "Family" for delicacy of the artistic kind; but as he was certainly a true etcher, though of a degraded school, it seemed right to mention him in this book. The observations on Ostade's coarse interpretation of peasant-life apply in their full force to Bega.

Early states of Ostade's etchings are now of great value, and have risen much in the market during the last twenty years. In 1838, Mr. Wilson's set was sold for 105*l.* Mr. Séguier afterwards gave 159*l.* 12*s.* for the same set, which was sold again in 1844 for 309*l.* 15*s.*, and again in 1846 for 500*l.* It is now worth a thousand guineas, ten times its value twenty years ago.

OSTADE. *La Famille* (Bartsch, I. 378, 46).—The copy by Charles Jacque given in this volume is accurate enough to afford a correct idea of the original plate, but it is not quite so delicate, and the reader would do well, when he has the opportunity, to refer to the proof in the British Museum, on page 54 of the first volume of the Ostade Collection. It is the most perfect work of the master, and quite remarkable for lighting and composition.

Ostade's sense of what was necessary to the support of a group, is like the artistic instinct which led the Gothic builders to use buttresses and low chapels round their edifices, and which in nature gives artistic value to the slopes of débris at the feet of mountains. For example, in this etching the composition rises always towards the right, and is buttressed by slopes to the left. See how amply the figure of the man is supported by the boy and the dog, and by the seated woman. This law of diminution to the left is carried out in the most trifling accessories, in the basins above the door, in the spaces between the three cross-pieces nailed to the beams, in the two boards near the ladder, in the openings of the bed and the door. If the woman had advanced her left foot instead of her right, the man behind her would not have been so well supported; and if the little dog had been absent, the buttressing on that side would not have been continued to the ground. The lighting is, of course, intended to give importance to the group; there are admirable reflections and transparencies in the shade.

It is unnecessary to analyse the other Ostade of which a copy is given here. Of his small plates, the reader is recommended to study (for their directness of manner) the bust of an old peasant with a pointed cap, and the smoker in an oval. The "Hurdy-gurdy Player" (dated 1647) is a curious instance of careful rendering of the folds of dress.

Some of Ostade's original coppers exist in Paris, but they are so worn that impressions are now worthless, and it was thought that good copies would be more acceptable to the reader.

Bega. *Le Cabaret* (Bartsch, v. 240, 35).—A group of peasants in an ale-house, with a very dark shading behind the figures; a brilliant and effective plate, but coarse in conception, and wanting in the artistic subtleties that distinguish the masterpiece of Ostade.

Bega's common fault of too much blackness in shadows is equally visible in a clever little figure with a short cloak, "L'Homme avec la Main dans le Pourpoint" (Bartsch v. 228, 10). The most delicate bit of work by Bega is the woman in the lozenge, "La Femme portant la Cruche" (Bartsch, v. 228, 9). The dress is very cleverly accentuated.

CHAPTER IV.

BERGHEM, POTTER, DUJARDIN.

THE great industry of Berghem, and his accurate knowledge of cattle, give him a certain firmness and precision with the point which are amongst the chief reasons for his reputation as an etcher. Nothing tends more to the popularity of an artist than a neat and clear manner, as free as possible from those vague seekings after excellence which are the marks of advance and aspiration; yet this very neatness is a quality which the higher criticism regards with dubious approval, because, though it proves the attainment of skill, it fixes the limitation of effort, and too frequently implies the abandonment of noble aims. Berghem and Verboeckhoven have this neatness, but Turner and Troyon have none of it; and our suspicions as to the value of the quality are fully confirmed by a comparison of these artists. Berghem had a kind of elegance often rather out of place in the subjects he chose, and his shepherds and shepherdesses attitudinise with airs and graces that belong rather to the rustics of Florian than to those of the actual world. His shadows were exceedingly transparent, and his reflections bright; he had the art of using emphasis well (with a view to the kind of result he aimed at), and he had absolute manual skill. But I cannot consider him a great etcher, and should rank him as nearly as possible on the same level with the modern Gauermann.

One has a natural tenderness for Paul Potter, because

Paulus Potter Jn et f: 1649

he died so early (at twenty-nine), and produced such clever pictures. He had clear sight, a firm hand, and a most excellent memory; but no imagination, and very little power of composition. No painter who ever lived retained a more vivid image of an animal after having seen it, nor could any painter copy that image better. But his art was never much more than a very brilliant copyism of facts, though since these facts were usually of a nature which the memory alone could enable him to record, his art is on that account more wonderful than the patient literalism which copies a helmet or a vase. Paul Potter had points of superiority over Berghem in his entire freedom from false elegance; he was quite unaffected, exceedingly clear and accurate in handling, yet not vain of his precision, nor at all anxious to display it. He etched with spirit, but was deficient in freedom, and did not sketch, nor see things with the comprehensiveness of a great sketcher like Rembrandt. I admire his power of memory, his vivacity and spirit, his genuine love of animals, his knowledge of animal construction, his certainty of hand; but consider that his weakness in comprehensive sketching and want of imagination disqualify him for a place in the first rank.

Karl Dujardin is one of those artists who, whilst enjoying a great reputation amongst the class of connoisseurs who never work from nature, retain slight hold on our admiration when our judgment has been fortified by much practical study. He learned his horse by heart, and his cow, and his sheep, and his pig, and his donkey, and his goat; and being able to draw them in a regular manner, and in any common attitude, set them in fancy landscapes of the kind which connoisseurs receive as a sufficient representation of nature. The example of Karl Dujardin given here is a very favourable one, being amongst his best plates. There is much truth in the attitudes of Dujardin's animals, and the power of drawing them as he did is by no means to be attained easily,

for it requires great labour and a certain natural gift; yet such animal design as his cannot be accepted as of first-rate excellence, because it is too methodical, and wanting in artistic synthesis. He is inferior in skill and knowledge to Paul Potter, but nearly of the same rank in point of artistic conception and imagination, and quite free from the misplaced elegance which often spoiled the work of Berghem. He was not a good etcher, because he could not sketch well; but his name could not be omitted in a work on etching, on account of his considerable reputation. His stiff, precise lines are not to be recommended for imitation, and his ignorance of landscape was complete. His merits are a certain knowledge of animals, expressed with perfect sincerity, and a dexterity sufficient for his purpose. His lighting is often luminous, but his chiaroscuro was feeble, because he had not the least idea of the value of local colour when translated into black and white; and in most of his etchings local colour is altogether omitted.

A curious instance of purchasing for curiosity occurred in the case of some animals by Berghem. He etched two sets of six each, and one of these sets was executed on a single copper, afterwards divided. Only one impression taken before the division is now known, and the British Museum paid 120*l.* for it. The present value of that proof is about 400*l.*, and its only superiority over good impressions of the six separate plates is a matter of pure curiosity, depending upon the not very interesting or important fact, that there is only one large plate-mark instead of six smaller ones.

BERGHEM. *The Rivulet by the ruined Monument.*—Without elaborate description, the reader may recognise this plate by the woman who is seated in the foreground, with her left foot in the water whilst she wipes the right. There are other figures, and cows, and goats, and sheep. There are traces of sculpture on the monument, especially

the bas-relief of a horse. This is one of Berghem's most brilliant and characteristic etchings. The brilliancy is obtained, in a great measure, by vigorous little bits of dark inserted in places where the artist had a fair pretext for their introduction. Plates of this class are usually kept very light, but the etchers were always on the look-out for such little spots of intense black as that under the woman's arm-pit here: when these were vigorously marked, a certain liveliness was the result. The student will observe the neat, sharp draughtmanship in the cattle, and the rather dandified elegance of the cowherd with the pole, and the woman who is washing her feet.

Le Joueur de Cornemuse (Bartsch, v. 257, 4).—A man on an ass meets a pedestrian with a bagpipe, and talks to him, showing him the way with his hand. Behind the piper is a man driving sheep and cows. To the right are many trees, and in the distance a softly-wooded hill. The group in the middle has a picturesque outline, and is exceedingly rich in shade. The work in this central group is generally of fine quality, but there is a somewhat morbid softness, not altogether masculine, in the distant foliage.

Le Berger assis sur la Fontaine (Bartsch, v. 259, 8).—Of all Berghem's plates this is the most characteristic of the master. The figures *pose* like models who have learned their business well, but not very like the peasants of actual life. The animals are all remarkable for an extraordinary clearness and neatness of execution. Observe especially the head and leg of the cow in the foreground. The shadows are kept exceedingly transparent, and the reflections light; the bucket is an epitome of Berghem's practice in these respects.

Tête de Bouc au Front noir (Bartsch, v. 267, 19).—A piece of very exquisite execution of its kind, especially in the horns and the dark hair on the goat's forehead. There is also a small plate with two goats' heads executed with equal skill. Work of this kind approaches more

nearly to modern ideas of etching than that of the old masters can be generally said to do. It is not unlike Gauermann in manner, and the best work of the English Club is of the same class.

PAUL POTTER (the plate given herewith).—The original copper is the property of M. Galichon, from whom it was rented for this work. It may be considered fairly representative of Paul Potter. The reader will observe how fully it bears out my observation, that he did not sketch. The two cows are presented with great force and with much brilliancy of effect; but the lines have never the freedom of great etching, and are, in fact, a sort of engraving with the etching-needle. The foreground plants are studied leaf by leaf, in the pre-Raphaelite manner, and with the pre-Raphaelite deficiency of synthesis. The three cows in the background, instead of being freely sketched according to the more artistic system of Rembrandt, are here engraved with a dry formality quite opposed to the spirit of etching. The same formality may be observed in the foliage, which is bad, and in the leafless tree, which is, if possible, worse.

Le Taureau (Bartsch, i. 41, 1).—This is one of the most firm and brilliant of Paul Potter's works, and the qualities of it are concentrated in the head, though there are fine indications of form on the body of the animal. There is a class of his etchings which have no pictorial completeness, but are simple studies of individual animals. Considered as studies, and without especial reference to the peculiar qualities of etching, these are always remarkable, and sometimes even astonishing. This bull is one of the best.

Three Studies of Horses: Le Cheval de la Frise (Bartsch, i. 47), *Le Cheval hennissant* (Bartsch, i. 49, 10), *La Mazette* (Bartsch, i. 41, 13).—These three studies are amongst the strongest things that Paul Potter ever did. The first is an illustration of power in repose, the second

of eager excitement, the third of melancholy decrepitude and of death. The most marvellous of the three is certainly the neighing horse, which is a brilliant feat of memory. The other two may have been studied more at leisure.

KARL DUJARDIN (the plate given herewith).—The best thing here is the head of the cow, which may be taken as a perfect example of Dujardin's most successful work. So, on the other hand, is he not unfairly represented by the childish weakness of the distant landscape. There is not the least merit of any kind in the trees and hill, and the buildings all lean to the left, in defiance of gravitation. There is no local colour; and tree, and hide, and grass are all left white in the light.

A Ruin near a Stream, Artist sketching.—Since there are no cattle here, but only a landscape and buildings, we can expect nothing but feebleness. This is modest and unpretending work, based upon the notions of landscape prevalent in the seventeenth century; but it is surprising how it was possible for a man who had really studied the construction of animals, not to have clearer insight into that of inanimate nature. Such work as this is as inferior to the etching of Haden or Lalanne, as the water-colours of a modern school-girl are to the work of Richardson. It sometimes happens that an artist will compensate for his sins against natural truth by the mere power of his workmanship; but here, as in all Dujardin's landscapes, the etching is as technically weak as the interpretation of nature is unintelligent and inadequate.

CHAPTER V.

VANDYKE AND HOLLAR.

IN the course of the last two hundred pages there has not been very much eulogy of the unqualified and enthusiastic kind. Good etchers are exceedingly rare, having hitherto been produced in Europe at the rate of about two in a century. It is possible that, notwithstanding the divergence of opinion on the subject of the rank and capabilities of the art, which unhappily subsists between the present writer and the large majority of the general public, there may, nevertheless, be more harmony between us than we supposed. The public is indifferent to all etchings whatever; the critic is indifferent to all but a very few etchings.

No true critic can be indifferent to Vandyke. He is one of the great princes of the art, a royal master who is to be spoken of only with the most profound respect. He had all the great qualities; he had perfect freedom and exquisite refinement; he used the needle with admirable ease and grace, and his masterly force was restrained and tempered with a cultivated severity. But it is inevitable that a genius of this kind, whose purposes were few, and who always kept steadily to the path where success ever attended him, should not offer matter for so much commentary as the less admirable and less wise, but more various and audacious artists who have undertaken many different enterprises, and alternately surprised the world by unexpected triumphs, and almost unaccountable failures.

A writer, cunning in his craft, who found himself obliged to supply many pages about Vandyke, would have recourse to speculations about the personages he painted, and the history and characteristics of their age; so that the artist himself would become nothing more than the pretext for a dissertation on manners and events. But of Vandyke himself, as an etcher, little more is to be said than the few sentences already written. His aims were few, his choice of means instinctively wise and right, his command of them absolute, his success complete.

Hollar was not a painter, but a most industrious engraver, and it has rarely happened hitherto that a professional engraver has produced original etchings of great artistic value. The training of an engraver is injurious to originality, and restrictive of freedom; it has also the drawback of being almost exclusively manual and interpretative; and there is always a great danger that the engraver who attempts artistic etching will fall into the set methods which have become habitual to him, and think less of the great artistic exigencies than of that manual neatness and polish which, as an aim in itself, great artists have ever disdained. There have, however, been one or two exceptions to this rule; and though it is generally true that, to become a great etcher, it is necessary to be first a great painter, it is also the fact that one or two engravers, by profession, have etched occasionally in the high artistic sense. The great majority of Hollar's etchings are not to be recommended as examples of this particular art, but one or two of them have a rare and delicate beauty which gives him a certain rank.

The proofs of Vandyke's etchings have greatly increased in value of late years. At M. Séguier's sale, in 1844, they averaged from three to eight pounds each, and were then thought to be very dear. At recent sales they have produced sums varying from eight to thirty pounds. Mr. Marshall's set, which a few years ago might have brought eighty or ninety pounds, was knocked down at

his sale (1864) for 400*l.* It may be considered certain that, as etching becomes better appreciated, the plates of Vandyke will attain still higher prices.

VANDYKE. *Lucas Vorstermans.*—The execution of the portrait itself, including the drapery, is quite magnificent, but the background is rather unfortunate in its formality. The regular horizontal lines are wanting in vivacity, and the little dots between them complete the appearance of mechanism. Whenever Vandyke falls into anything like mechanism, it is sure to be in a background; and on this account I should sometimes prefer an early state, before the background was added. In the portrait of Vorstermans the hair is very free and beautiful, and there are some remarkably fine darks in the drapery, especially to the left side.

Justus Suttermans.—There is much nobility in the well-set, intelligent head; but the wonder of execution in this portrait is the costume, especially on Sutterman's left shoulder, where the lightness of the lace-collar contrasts with the firm and elaborate drawing of the gatherings of the cloth. Observe the good sketching of the right hand, and the way in which the finish of the left shoulder passes gradually into free and loose indication below the waist.

Franciscus Vrannx.—A grand old fellow with a strong, kind-looking face, and observant eyes, which he was accustomed to use, for Vrannx was a painter of Antwerp. Observe the masterly indication of the irregular moustache and small beard, and the flowing lines of the mantle.

Joannes Snellinx.—One of the most genial of all Vandyke's portraits, and, technically, one of the finest. The countenance beams with good humour, and the etching is luminous and lively. The figure, in this instance, has received no injury from its background of sky and cloud.

HOLLAR. *Gentleman playing on a Guitar.*—The Hollar collection, at the British Museum, is so very extensive, that it may be well to inform the reader that this is the last plate in the sixth volume there. The guitar-player is seated near an open window, through which are visible a tower and some shipping. The guitar is of curious construction, being double-scrolled. The player has long hair, a beardless, youthful face, and very beautiful, somewhat feminine hands. This etching is remarkable for a quite extraordinary delicacy of treatment and a most exquisite taste. It is not so vigorous as the work of Vandyke, but fully equal to him in elegance. The methodical habits of the engraver recur most in the window-opening, and are especially observable in the mechanical treatment of the sky. There is a great deal of lovely curvature in the guitar and the player's hands, and it is probable that Hollar may have felt the utility of the stiff window lines as a contrast. The tonality of the whole plate is quite perfect in its own key.

The long View of Greenwich.—Recommended for study, only on account of the distance and the Observatory. The foreground, which is covered with dull engraver's work, is curiously barren and uninteresting, and even the sky is mechanical.

CHAPTER VI.

CANALETTI, RUYSDAEL, AND OTHERS.

THERE is a certain clearness of manner, and simplicity of purpose, in Canaletti, as an etcher, which makes his work esteemed, not only by connoisseurs, who usually follow tradition in their estimate of works of art, but even by true critics and artists. It is possible that a reason for the reputation of his etchings may be that, although he lived sufficiently long ago to be accepted with the respect given by connoisseurs to old masters, he has much of that modern feeling for the picturesque which most of us secretly enjoy, and which, in this case, we may legitimately applaud. If Canaletti were a living contemporary, connoisseurship would be less satisfied of his merits; for connoisseurship, like the Catholic Church, waits a hundred years before it canonizes its saints.

Canaletti's work is clear, and simple, and honest; but it has very little freedom, a moderate appreciation of beauty, no grace, and no imagination. He saw that Venice was picturesque, and in him the modern enjoyment of architecture, as a pictorial subject, found its first adequate expression; but we have better architectural painters in these days; and though good etchers are always very rare, we have one or two men who etch better than Canaletti. The word which best characterises him is respectable mediocrity, but it is mediocrity; still, however respectable.

His subjects were usually well selected, and his effects

pictorial, though of the most ordinary kind. His etchings would have greatly benefited by a more thorough study of tonality; in several of the most important there are obvious faults of relation, chiefly due to a timidity about the values of near shadow and of local colour. In slighter work than that of Canaletti there may be much frank *omission*, even of tonic relations; but he laboured his plates all over, and when he failed in this respect it was not the bold transgression of consummate science, but the hesitating error of half-knowledge.

Ruysdael has an immense fame amongst connoisseurs, especially on the Continent; but this is one of those cases in which the modern study of nature is sure to drive the student either into secret revolt or open rebellion. I say nothing here of his pictures, which are out of my present subject, and the reader may worship Ruysdael as a "god of painting," if that kind of devotion is necessary to his spiritual comfort; but of Ruysdael, as an etcher, I say simply that he is down somewhere in the fifth or sixth rank, and that such moderns as Étienne and Michelin are, to say the least, his equals. It is intelligible that when work like that of Ruysdael is held up as the work of a great master, the majority of the public, not having time to investigate the matter for themselves, conclude that the whole art of etching is imperfect.

Salvator had magnificent gifts of a certain kind, but was not a good etcher, because he did not insist upon the especial powers of the art. All that Salvator did in etching might be done equally well in engraving, and he really aimed at the artistic objects of the great Italian engravers. Some of his plates are admirable in their way, but they are all bad examples of etching. The finest of them, to my mind, is "The Abandonment of Œdipus," which is sufficiently studied below.

Dietrich was exceedingly clever, manually, and very various in manner, but he was remarkable only as an unusually apt imitator of other men's work. His talent,

in this respect, was nearly equal to the wonderful gift of our contemporary, Flameng, and would have been better employed in copying rare plates of the great masters than in attempting subjects of his own choosing. He is mentioned here because, if the reader listens much to the prevalent ideas about etchers, he may be led to waste time in studying him, and embarrass himself with speculations as to which, of all the various manners in which Dietrich worked, was the manner of Dietrich. I doubt whether he *had* any manner. A plate is mentioned below as being, in all probability, the nearest expression of his personal feeling; but most likely it is, as to workmanship, a reminiscence of some engraver unknown to me.

Everdingen produced a considerable number of etchings, of which by far the greater proportion are wholly unprofitable for study. Considering the century in which he lived, Everdingen was, however, remarkable for a genuine love of wild scenery. He loved rocks and mountain-streams, with cottages and *chalets*, and so far is in unison with our modern sentiment. I am rather prejudiced in his favour on this account, and should have been glad to praise him heartily if he had been a more powerful aquafortist. He worked generally in a clear and intelligible way, and several of his plates are very pretty. As an aquafortist he reached a certain moderate skill, sufficient for the expression of his ideas, but had not much power of hand or nobility of style. He was also destitute of invention.

Waterloo and Weirotter are very perfectly represented by the examples given in this book. They were both accomplished men in their way; and Weirotter is especially remarkable for his industry. Waterloo had a great liking for sylvan scenery, which he represented as well as any landscape-etcher of his time, but without either the tenderness of Claude, the grandeur of Salvator, or the accurate knowledge of the moderns. Weirotter was very fond of picturesque buildings, of which he etched an immense

variety, usually composing them very happily with other material, such as marine subjects, figures, and landscape. He had the great artistic quality of being able to reach the tonality he aimed at, in which he seems to have had a certainty equal to that of a painter, and many of his etchings are almost as complete, in this respect, as pictures. They are frequently luminous and agreeable in aspect, and it is quite intelligible that their author should still enjoy a considerable reputation; but he was rather an engraver than a true etcher; and although there are passages in his works of considerable freedom, they are not, on the whole, examples of the kind of ability which a pure etcher should endeavour to acquire.

CANALETTI. *La Torre di Malghera.*—A white tower to the right, and two low buildings to the left of it; mountains in the distance, and water in the foreground, with a boat under the building, and a gondola coming into the picture, on the left. There are clouds in the sky, which is etched with much labour. The water is entirely rippled.

Of all Canaletti's etchings this one is the most luminous and the most modern in its choice and interpretation of subject. The buildings are etched with much force and considerable freedom, but the sky is too mechanical.

Le Procuratie e S. Ziminian.—A large, open place in Venice. To the right is the corner of a lofty building with balcony shades, and, to the left, another building with arches. There are high Venetian masts in the open square. This etching is truer, as to general tonality, than any other by Canaletti, but the subject is somewhat formal, and much inferior, as picturesque material, to those which Canaletti found accidentally in places less generally known.

RUYSDAEL. *Le Petit Pont* (Bartsch, i. 311, 1).—This is one of Ruysdael's important plates, and the subject in nature was, no doubt, exceedingly picturesque, but the

artist has not fully availed himself of the fine quality of his material. The rendering of decayed thatch and rough wall is considerably inferior, in point of skill, to good modern work; and the relation of masses is so entirely lost sight of, that the plate, as a whole, is feeble. There is little composition, for the etching is merely a study; but, such as it is, more might have been made of it.

Les Voyageurs (Bartsch, i. 313, 4).—A rivulet running through a forest. A large forest-tree stands towards the left, with its roots in the water; a smaller one has fallen forwards across the stream. On the right hand are three travellers on the river-bank, and above them a space of sky with clouds.

This may be quite fairly taken as a representative of Ruysdael's landscapes. One cannot refuse to it the merit of a certain picturesque wildness, for which Ruysdael had an instinctive feeling; but only those connoisseurs who make themselves the uncritical echoes of tradition would ascribe either to this plate, or to any other of its class, any especial value as an interpretation of nature, or any considerable rank as art. It is work of nearly the same value, though not at all of the same kind, as that of the modern French etcher Étienne; yet I did not think it necessary to give special mention to Étienne in my account of the French school, and should probably have omitted Ruysdael in this place, if his great reputation had allowed me to pass him in silence.

SALVATOR. *The Abandonment of Œdipus.*—The shepherd is tying Œdipus by the feet to the trunk of a great chesnut-tree. There is much grandeur in the design of this tree, and the arrangement of the figures. Many contemporary landscape-painters, especially Mr. McCallum, could draw a fine tree, with closer imitative veracity, but there is a magnificent passion in this design of Salvator's, and a determined intention to make us feel certain striking elements of forest sublimity which are not common in any

school, and always exceedingly rare amongst the literal designers. We are made thoroughly to feel the great height of the tree, and the vast reach of its far-spreading, intricate branches. Its trunk rises like a lofty tower, and its clustered leaves poise themselves above our heads like the wings of innumerable birds. These qualities, however, might have been equally well given in a pen-drawing; and neither this, nor any other etching of Salvator, insists upon the especial advantages and superiorities of etching as an independent art. Salvator, like many other artists, employed etching as a convenient process for the multiplication of his drawings, just as in these days he might have employed the graphotype; but he was not, in the peculiar and especial sense, an etcher.

DIETRICH. *The Satyr in the Peasant's House.*—A satyr having paid a friendly visit to a peasant, accepts his hospitality, and attempts to eat hot soup with a spoon; but, not being accustomed to utensils of that kind, declines, with much energy of gesture, to repeat the experiment. There is plenty of vivacity in the action, and the group is engraved with considerable skill. I use the word *engraved* purposely, because this is rather engraving with the needle than free etching.

EVERDINGEN. *Les Chaumières sur le Bord d'un Torrent* (British Museum, Everdingen, vol. i. p. 19).—Two chalet-like cottages to the left; a stream flowing down amongst rocks over a weir made of a trunk of pine; rocks and rising land to the right; pines and other trees. Four goats in the right corner, and three other goats on a shaded rock near the middle of the etching.

I think this is the most charming of all Everdingen's bits of wild river scenery. It is very fresh in treatment, and it is evident that the artist had a real liking for rocks and rude cottages by wooded hills and streams.

L'Homme à l'Ouverture de la Haie délabrée (British

Museum, Everdingen, vol. i. p. 19).—A little hill, with a wooden cottage on it, and a wooden fence in front of the cottage all knocked down; there are some pigs and goats, and a man who is walking down from the cottage happens to be near an opening in the fence—whence the title. The sky is clouded, and there are a few trees behind the building.

This subject, though simple, is agreeably composed, and much use is made of the variously-inclined stakes in the broken fence. In the quality of freshness, this etching is equal to the preceding one, and both are above the usual average of the artist.

WATERLOO (the plate given here).—Waterloo etched a great many studies of trees, of which this is the best example I could find amongst the many plates of his of which the coppers still remain in fair condition. The reader will see that Waterloo had clear ideas of the richness, and fulness, and softness of foliage; that he studied the projection of its masses, and could group his trees effectively. The black shadow, in the left-hand corner, forming a triangle with the edges of the plate, is a conventionalism very commonly found in the landscape-art of Waterloo's time.

WEIROTTER. *A River Scene* (British Museum, vol. ii. p. 56).—A group of boats, with sails, in the afternoon sunshine, their stems towards the spectator. Men are taking an anchor in a small boat to the right, and two men are rowing in another small boat to the left, over which is a windmill on the shore. For its brilliant lighting, clear composition, and fine tonality, I think this is the best of all Weirotter's river subjects, and, on the whole, his most desirable etching.

Civita Vecchia.—A round tower to the left, from an opening in which men are bringing merchandise down an inclined plane to a boat. The tower and other buildings

are relieved against dark trees, and there are large white clouds in the lower part of the sky, against which come the yards of several lateeners. The foreground is entirely water-calm, but slightly rippled with boats. This is a very characteristic example of Weirotter, for it includes all the kinds of material which he most enjoyed. The plate is bright and effective; but a greater etcher would not have given to it such steady equality of labour. Weirotter could arrange a subject well, and had much manual ability; but he had not the wayward choice, the delicate emphasis, the charming caprices, and inimitably wise omissions of the nobler aquafortists. He was rather an engraver with the etching-needle, engraving his own designs, than what we understand by the rarely merited title of etcher.

CHAPTER VII.

GOYA.

IT has not been part of the plan of this book to give either biographical detail, or much commentary on those qualities of artists which lie altogether outside of the artistic qualities. It is easy, under the pretext of art-criticism, to fill volumes both larger and more readable than this, with matter in which purely artistic studies are a very inconsiderable ingredient; and I am clearly aware that a shrewder literary craftsman would have thrown the art of etching altogether into the background, and amused his readers with pleasant stories about the adventures of Salvator and the amorous intrigues of Goya. Resisting these temptations, I have kept in view one purpose only, the study of etching as an art, and have given space to etchers only so far as they have either really excelled in the art, or at least had the reputation of excelling in it.

Whoever cares to know about the life of Goya may find full information in M. Charles Yriarte's "Biography" (published by Plon, 10, rue Garancière, Paris, 1867), which, though a narrative of facts, is the most extraordinary romance of artist-life imaginable. Goya was a man of very remarkable endowments outside of art. He had immense physical energy and courage, and at least as much moral audacity. He was ready to measure swords with any bully who might present himself, and

sought adventures of this kind in the disorders of the public streets. His numerous illustrations of bull-fights are derived from personal experience in the arena; but he defied things even more dangerous than any mere animal rage, for he was openly revolutionary in religion and politics, exposed himself to the hostility of the Inquisition, and even violated the rigid etiquette of the Court of Spain. His successes with the fair sex were innumerable; his strength and courage, his easy self-confidence and conquering address, made him a master in the arts of gallantry, and he had mistresses in every rank of life, from the women of the common people to the most exalted ladies of the court.

Goya had imagination, but of a frightful sort, like the imagination of a man suffering from delirium tremens; yet this imaginative familiarity with evil spirits does not seem to have affected the happiness of his existence,—a happiness, such as it was, based on the substantial realities of the most robust health and complete professional success, with the satisfaction of all the appetites of an energetic animal nature. His etchings are the expression of his violent and ebullient personality; they are full of passion, but it is observable, that there is no trace of any delicate or tender sentiment, or rather that what in other men would have been a sentiment of this kind, as for instance pity for the sufferings of the afflicted, takes, in Goya, the form of protest and antagonism, and becomes a furious cry of hatred against the oppressor. M. Yriarte tells us, that in Spain there exist pictures by Goya which prove artistic delicacy and good taste, that there are passages of sweet colour, and feats of tranquil and loving finish; but I am compelled to doubt whether M. Yriarte's enthusiasm for the subject of his book may not have led him to regard those works too favourably. It is certain that he immensely exaggerates Goya's rank as an aquafortist, in attributing to him technical skill, and especially in saying that he had "few rivals in the

practice of his art." As a practical aquafortist (considering for the moment the technical side alone, and without prejudice to what Goya may have done as a painter), I cannot admit that he was an artist at all; I cannot admit that he ever got beyond a rash and audacious dilettantism. It is quite possible that a good painter may be a bad etcher: there are several instances of this amongst our contemporaries; and it is also possible that his etching may bear some of the worst marks of presumptuous amateurship. Goya was original in manner, because he took up the process without profiting by the experience of his predecessors; but ignorance is generally original, for it has no traditions.

It is natural that literary men should like to write about Goya, because he is an excellent subject, and very strong things may be said about his works without overstepping the limits of simple truth. A well-known living poet wrote a volume entitled "Chastisements," and at the close of some verses of extraordinary force, said grimly to his victim, "I hold the red iron, and I see thy flesh smoke." This is exactly the temper of Goya; he was always inflicting chastisements, always holding red branding-irons, and watching the steam hissing from the shrivelled cuticle and the bubbling blood. Of all the great satirists, he is nearest to the nature of a fiend. It was here that his power lay, in his satanic hate and scorn, not in the mastery of a refined and delicate art. It is right to add, that though licentious to the depths of his being, he had more sympathy with certain great modern ideas than any other famous Spaniard. He was a son of the great revolution, and liberal in feeling, though attached to a dissolute court. His works have an important philosophical bearing, often disguised to evade the Inquisition; and he tried to make men disgusted with the horrors of war. Even his immorality is sometimes only a protest against the still deeper legal immorality of the *mariage de convenance.*

Bull-fighting: Plate 3.—An artist who undertakes to illustrate the science of bull-fighting ought at least to be able to draw the parts of a bull. The ignorance of construction is here so complete, that the nostrils are represented by two small round holes, the eye is out of proportion and badly set, and the ear is not in its right place. There is not a single instance, in all the thirty-three illustrations of bull-fighting, of an eye or an ear even tolerably well drawn. In one or two plates the nostrils are a little better than these, but Goya's most general notion of a nostril, either in a bull or horse, is a round hole bored with a large gimlet. He has never, in a single instance, drawn the ear of either animal.

Bull-fighting: Plate 7.—Goya's childish ignorance of animal form was seldom more strikingly manifested than in the wretched little bull in the right-hand corner of this plate. There was no difficulty in the attitude, for it is the easiest of all possible attitudes; and since it is the same as that of Paul Potter's bull, the reader may advantageously compare the two animals. Paul Potter had not the fire of Goya, nor his ferocity, but he condescended to study nature, which Goya did not, and so taught himself the proportions of the creature, and the shape of its most important joints. To begin at the ground, look at these hoofs and fetlocks! Could the bull gallop with them? Could he even stand on them?

Bull-fighting: Plate 10.—If you take an old rocking-horse, and char its head with fire, and then smear what remains of its face with thick white paint, you will possess in sculpture a work of art accurately corresponding in scientific truths and artistic value to this wonderful horse of Goya. The combination of ignorance with assurance never ended in the production of art more hideously corrupt. Its formlessness is like the falling away of putrefied flesh. The art here is not merely lifeless, but it is *rotten*—not a pleasant word to use, but the most appropriate.

Caprices: Plate 23, "*Aquellos polbos.*"—The first two words of a Spanish proverb which means, "From this dust comes that mud." The subject is a woman condemned by the Inquisition, and clothed in the frightful and fantastic costume which its victims had to wear. It is the nearest approach to good etching by Goya that I remember. The figure is simply and vigorously indicated, and there is nothing unnatural or distorted in the attitude.

Caprices: Plate 30, *Porque esconderlos?* ("Why hide them?")—An old man wants to hide his money-bags, and his heirs are laughing at him, because they know that, however closely he clutches them, his death will shortly place them in other hands. Nothing can exceed the hideousness and baseness of these figures; and the curious thing is that Goya evidently liked to contemplate such baseness.

Caprices: Plate 36, *Mala Noche.*—Two wretched women out in a dark, windy night, their dresses blown about. There is some poetry here, of a terrible kind, and the plate is impressive. Goya's system of aqua-tinting for light and shade, though artistically far less complete than Turner's mezzotint, from the all but total absence of gradation, is here sufficient for his purpose, and gives the necessary violence of opposition to the white petticoats of the women, and the necessary blackness to the night.

The etchings of Goya are in several different series: "The Caprices," 80 plates; "The Disasters of War," 80 plates; "Bull-fighting," 33 plates; "The Proverbs," and "The Prisoners." He also etched a series of horses after Velasquez, and a series of dwarves after the same master, besides many original separate plates. Many of these are now rare, and I have only studied about two hundred of Goya's etchings; enough, however, to convince me that, though he had certainly the genius of a satirist, and plenty of imagination of the most horrible kind, his etchings

have no artistic value whatever, and owe their great fame entirely to the fascination of their incomparable horror, and a kind of philosophical reflection whose bitterness suits our taste.

NOTE.

Since the above chapter was in type, I have met with a small original etching by Goya, "The Prisoner," of which the copper belongs to M. Lefort. That plate is good even as an etching; the quality of the work is really fine. This may be considered to prove that Goya was not incapable of etching, but he etched well so rarely and badly so often that he is a most unsafe example.

CHAPTER VIII.

MODERN GERMAN ETCHERS.

I AM much less familiar with the modern German than with the English and French schools, but have had slight encouragement to farther study in the little I know of it. There is plenty of neatness, and of what is popularly considered "finish," in German work, but hardly ever the least sign of that especial kind of power that an etcher ought to possess. Gauermann is the artist who, of all modern Germans, approaches most nearly to an etcher, but he has not the true gift, and stands somewhere between Ansdell and Berghem. Eberle finishes wonderfully in a detestably pretty modern way; and Brennhauser is skilful to a degree which is perfectly irritating as a misapplication of labour. The landscapes of Zimmermann and Würthle are manlier work, but still not sufficiently free and intuitive; and Morgenstern, who punningly signs himself "Morgen*," is somewhat bolder than Zimmermann, though still wanting in lightness and grace. There are several enormous Kunstverein (Art Union) etchings in the British Museum, which without exception are, in comparison with the intelligent art the true etchers, the veriest outcomings of Philistinism Mere skill with the fingers, and patience in labour, without selection, without comprehensiveness, without emphasis, without passion, are offensive in proportion to their very success. The more a dull etcher practises the art, and the more he trains himself in the sort of base dexterity

that dulness devises, the more hopeless does his work become. These remarks, be it remembered, extend only to such German work as is known to me, and that is not much. I reserve, of course, full liberty to praise good etchings made in Germany, if such should ever come in my way.

ETCHING AND ETCHERS.

BOOK V.

PROCESSES

Readers who do not intend to etch may think that Processes do not concern them, and so skip this part of the book. But the truth is, that Processes concern every one who cares about art, or ever talks about it. No one can speak with justice of the merits of any artist unless he clearly understands, and always takes into consideration, the technical conditions under which the artist has worked. It is true that there exists on the part of the public an impatience of technical considerations; and writers on art, who prudently avoid them, are praised by reviewers for this abstinence. But no one who is aware how closely the nature of Processes is involved in all that is best and highest in the Fine Arts, can think of the general ignorance of them without regret, and a desire to help in removing it. Studies like those in the following chapters are the very basis and rudiments of criticism. Knowledge of this kind, however, seems so humble, and so far beneath the lofty regions of æsthetic thought, that many connoisseurs have a contempt for it.

CHAPTER I.

THE PLATE.

MY experience of bad plates is not large enough to be of any use. I always get my coppers of Mr. Wilson, Harp Alley, Shoe Lane, and have no fault to find with them; but M. Jacquemart, the excellent French etcher, tells me that foreign coppers are less trustworthy, and in French manuals on engraving I find many warnings about the choice of coppers, of which the following is the substance.

The chief defects to be guarded against seem to be excess, or deficiency, or inequalities of density. A plate good for engraving is homogeneous and sound in substance; a bad plate is often either too hard or too porous, or both. After a little practice, the etcher may learn to test a plate in two ways, either by engraving a few lines upon it with a burin, or leaving a few drops of diluted acid on its surface, and, after having washed them away, examining the roughened surface they have left with the help of a microscope. If the burin is used, the noise it makes will tell the ear, and the degree of opposition will tell the hand, when a plate is too dense to be of use, or when there are inequalities of density. The test by acid informs the eye when the grain of the copper is irregular; this cannot be detected on the polished surface, but is seen easily when the acid has removed the polish and shows the real grain of the metal.

Hammer-beaten coppers are preferred to rolled coppers. Plates which have been planed several times are supposed to gain by the process. The plates which I have in stock

have all been planed several times, and are excellent, but whether they are any better for the replaning I have not been able to determine. If there is any truth in the theory, it may be consolatory to beginners, who are likely to make so many failures, that their plates will often return to the planer's hands.

The reader may feel some interest in the industry of preparing coppers for his use. There is not a harder trade going. The piece of copper is first cut out of a sheet which has to be thick, to allow of reduction in the polishing, and violently hammered for a long time; then it is fixed to a strong table by nails whose heads grip the edges of the copper, and the workman attacks it. He has a terrible hooked tool inserted in the end of a thick long handle; he leans this handle on his right shoulder, and presses with both hands on the sloping stick, so as to bring the hook at the end of it heavily upon the copper. This hook has a sharp cutting edge about an inch broad, and as the workman draws it strongly towards him, it takes a shaving of copper from the plate, disengaging a quantity of fine poisonous metallic dust, which the workman breathes. He goes on taking shavings in this way till the surface of the plate is free from any little holes, after which the plate is hammered again, but this time with a broad, convex, polished hammer, and less violently than before. The plate is now fixed on a table in a tank of water, a little below the surface, and the planer polishes it with sandstone, first in one direction, then in the other. The sandstone removes any hammer marks that there may be, or other inequalities, but it leaves scratches of its own which would print as lines, or the lightest of them would leave a dirty shade. It is therefore necessary to polish these away, and pumice-stone is used for the purpose, in water, just as the sandstone was used. The pumice-stone removes the scratches of the sandstone, but leaves finer scratches of its own, deep enough to yield an unpleasant tint in the printing. To get these away, a fine sharpening stone is used, and as *this* leaves some

trace the plate is finally polished with willow charcoal, of whose valuable qualities we shall have more to say in another chapter.

Plates for engraving may be polished still further with the burnisher, but etchers like them to be finished simply with charcoal, because this leaves a surface which, though very even and sound, is not bright, and which consequently in the printing yields an even and agreeable tint. The fact is, that the charcoal leaves an infinite number of very minute scratches, of equal depth, and these retain a little ink, which is visible only as a delicate tint on the paper.

Plates should be bevelled at the edges, but planers are rather apt to neglect the due finishing of the bevels, so that they often require to be finished with charcoal by the etcher himself. When plates are not bevelled, the plate mark is excessive in depth, and if the paper used is thick it sometimes breaks it, and under all circumstances has a rather disagreeable appearance.

We have spoken hitherto of copper plates only. Brass plates have been tried for their greater hardness, but the quality of the mixed metal was found to be unequal and untrustworthy, so that now brass is never used for anything artistic, though maps, it is said, are occasionally engraved upon it. Zinc is a very porous metal, but for rather coarse and picturesque sketches on a large scale it may be used with advantage by an artist who makes the best of its peculiar qualities. Formerly the great objection to zinc was the small number of proofs which it yielded, but this is now overcome by electro-metallurgy. A zinc plate cannot be steeled, but it can be coppered, and with this protection will yield an edition. Zinc may sometimes be useful to amateurs who only desire a small number of proofs to give to their friends, even without the coat of copper, and then it is a very cheap metal to use. Sketches done in a simple way, without much delicate shading, as for instance caricatures, may be just as good on zinc as on any other metal, but it is not suitable for finished work.

Steel is an admirable material for etching, but there is the objection to it that one can never trust a steel plate out of sight without anxiety. People are so careless, even about the most valuable property, that they can seldom be trusted to take care of things that rust easily corrupts. Not long ago, a very valuable steel plate, by an eminent engraver whom I knew, was so entirely destroyed by rust that the idea of publishing it had to be abandoned; and though the confession tells against myself, I may add that through too much confidence in a coat of grease I once allowed a few plates to rust in the same way. If you use steel at all, it must be on the understanding that the plate will seldom be quite safe out of your own hands, and not much safer even there, unless you take the trouble to varnish it thoroughly every time it is laid by, and look well after it when it is out of its box.

The only superiority of steel over copper consisted in its yielding larger editions; but this scarcely concerns etchers, except book illustrators, because the art is so little cared for that a large edition would remain on the publisher's shelves. Even book illustrators may now etch on copper, since plates may be steeled; so that it is less necessary to resort to steel than ever it was.

It is not out of place here to ask, why so laborious and unhealthy an occupation as plate-planing should still be done by manual labour? Perhaps machinery may have been invented for it without the fact having reached me, but if no such machinery has been invented yet, it ought to be, and certainly might be. The whole operation, from beginning to end, is exactly of the kind which machines accomplish perfectly. The object is merely to produce an even surface, first by taking off shavings of copper and afterwards by long friction with different materials. No shape has to be given to the metal; it has merely to be made quite level. Many more complex and difficult things are done by machinery every day.

Every etcher ought, once in his life, to see a plate

prepared, from the moment when it is cut out of the sheet to that when it is folded in silver paper and laid by for his use. It is enough to correct any tendency to trifling. If so much hard and resolute labour has been given merely to prepare the copper for us, how can we work upon it in any other than a serious and manly temper? Too often, I fear, that first labour is braver and honester than the artistic work which succeeds to it, and the copper, if it could think, might make some such reflection as this: "The first man who worked upon me was rough in his ways, but he was terribly in earnest; as for this gentleman who plays with me now, I cannot tell what to make out of him."

CHAPTER II.

THE NEEDLE.

ANYTHING in the shape of a pencil with a hard point will do for an etching needle. A clever etcher suggests:—

"A point formed of a faulty diamond, or a colourless sapphire, or a piece of chalcedony, or a rock crystal, or any primitive stone having a natural cleavage and a cutting edge, firmly fixed in a pencil of ebony by a gold or platinum band."

These materials were mentioned because the etcher desired to work in the acid, and a steel point would have been slowly dissolved. But steel is the material usually employed for etching points. They are very commonly set in wooden holders. A better plan is to have the whole instrument of steel. Take a lead-pencil and cut it to an exceedingly long and fine point, then give that to the nearest worker in iron, and tell him to make an exact copy of it in steel: have three such steel pencils, and keep them

to different degrees of sharpness. You will find them much heavier than those usually sold, which are merely needles set in wood, but they are all the better for being heavier; a heavy needle keeps of itself a constant and equal pressure on the plate, whereas with a light one you are obliged to exert some pressure yourself, or else the varnish will not be entirely removed. Now it may happen with a light needle, and indeed not unfrequently *does* happen, that the etcher, being absorbed by his artistic thoughts, forgets occasionally to keep up the full pressure, and then the varnish, though sufficiently cleared away to show the copper, is not entirely cleared away, and the acid cannot attack the copper equally. This is especially likely to happen to inexperienced etchers, because they retain from the practice of some other art, such as pencil-drawing, the habit of varying their pressure, and when they want to etch some delicate passage they instinctively and without reflection press too lightly.

Your heavy needle may be sharpened at both ends to different degrees of sharpness. In this case, care must be taken to have it thick enough in the middle to gain the required weight.

For work of great delicacy use fine small sewing-needles set in a metal holder. A convenient way of fastening them is a little screw with a drop of sealing-wax to keep the needle steady. I use a mathematical pen for this purpose; its two halves hold the needle between them when tightened by the little screw; and sealing-wax dropped into the open space and worked round whilst soft between the finger and thumb, keeps the needle firm.

If you etch in the acid—of which more hereafter—you may at first feel much alarmed about the fate of your needle, because if it is of steel the acid no doubt will in time dissolve it. Well, and suppose it does? Let us hope that the expense will not ruin you; it will average less than a farthing for every sitting. However, if this expenditure seems too serious to be regularly incurred, it may

be stopped in various more or less economical ways. You may have a needle of pure gold; the acid will not dissolve that, and gold would be an excellent material for an etching needle, being so very heavy. A small rod of glass, sharpened like a lead pencil, would no doubt answer very well, though I have not tried it.

When you have worked a little with these needles, an ingenious idea will very probably occur to you. You will invent a combination of two or more needles in the same holder, to get on faster with the tiresome shading. One clever gentleman put six needles together into a sort of flat brush, and shaded with remarkable rapidity. It is my duty, however, to say plainly that these dodges are a mischievous delusion, and can only lead to a waste of time and a spoiling of plates. You cannot direct your six needles together in six different ways, and if they go all alike they must be going contrary to the great principle of etching, which is a thought for every line. They will not act like the bristles of a painter's brush; *that* is a tool which may be used by an intelligent artist, because it is flexible and obedient, but your six stiff needles in a row like the teeth of a comb will always go together, and repeat your idea six times over.

We meet with very different opinions as to the degree to which needles ought to be sharpened. Some writers maintain that the copper should never be attacked by the point, but only laid bare; others say that it ought always to be attacked. It will be found in practice that if the needle is sharp enough to draw delicately the copper will always be slightly scratched. This is of very little consequence; the acid bites a little sooner, that is all. If on other parts of the plate the copper has not been really bared, the acid will perhaps not attack the lines at all, and then we shall have partial biting, which is ruin. For work of extreme minuteness it is necessary to sharpen our small sewing-needles very often, and a stone should be kept at hand for the purpose. When you work in the acid, the

acid keeps your points sharp for you, but not always quite to the shape you may desire. At these times they may be polished on the stone, or with a little emery-paper.

It is well to have an *exceedingly* blunt needle, to be used occasionally in work of great vigour.

CHAPTER III.

GROUNDS AND VARNISHES.

IN English the resinous coat which protects the plate is usually called the "ground," and the word "varnish" is reserved for that which is applied with a brush. The French use the word *vernis* for both, indiscriminately, distinguishing liquid varnish as *vernis au pinceau* or *petit vernis*.

Grounds are of almost infinite variety; anything that will resist acid and can be spread in a thin coat, neither too hard nor too soft for the work of the needle, is good for an etching ground.

The ground that I use is supplied to me by Mr. Fenn, tool-maker, in Newgate Street; it is of good quality. I have made an equally good ground myself, of white wax, resin, and Burgundy pitch, modifying the proportions according to the season. In summer you may use a harder varnish—that is, one with a larger proportion of resin—and in winter a softer, having a larger proportion of wax. When I make a ground I pay very little attention to receipts, but after one or two experiments reach the degree of hardness I require. The reader is recommended not to be discouraged, if on trying a receipt it should not exactly answer his purpose; a few trials in adding the hard or the softing redient will usually give him what he wants.

Here are a few receipts for grounds, borrowed from Roret's Encyclopædia :—

1. *Bossé's Ground.*—White wax, very pure, 50 grammes; gum mastic, very pure, 30 gr.; asphaltum, 15 gr.

2. *Rembrandt's Ground* (*so-called*), *White.*—White wax, 30 grammes; gum mastic, 15 gr.; asphaltum or amber, 15 gr. To make this ground, the mastic and asphaltum must be pounded separately in a mortar. Melt the wax in a glazed earthenware pot, and little by little add the other ingredients, stirring all the time.

3. *Callot's Ground.*—White wax, 60 grammes; amber or asphaltum, 60 gr.; gum mastic, from 30 to 60 gr., according to the heat of the weather,—the hotter the weather the more gum mastic; resinous pitch, 30 gr.; common pitch, 30 gr.; turpentine, 15 gr.

Ground 4.—White wax, 30 grammes; asphaltum, 30 gr.; black pitch, 15 gr.; Burgundy pitch, 12 gr.

Ground 5.—White wax, 75 grammes; Burgundy pitch, 90 gr.; resinous pitch, 15 gr.; asphaltum, 60 gr.

Ground 6.—White wax, 60 grammes; black pitch, 15 gr.; Burgundy pitch, 15 gr.; asphaltum in fine powder, 8 gr.

Ground 7.—White wax, 40 grammes; resin, 50 gr.; black pitch, 20 gr.; resinous pitch, 10 gr.

Ground 8.—White wax, 90 grammes; asphaltum, 60 gr.; Greek pitch, 60 gr.

Whichever of these grounds you prepare, it is of consequence never to let them burn, to keep them always well stirred, and to pour them when mixed into warm water; after which they may be rolled into small balls before they harden. It is necessary to use very pure materials; asphaltum, it appears, is usually more or less impure, containing various foreign substances which, being soluble in mordants, expose a plate to spotting. To purify asphaltum, the following method has been proposed by M. Deleschamps. It may be powdered, and washed in water acidulated with muriatic acid. This dissolves the metallic oxides, and organic substances float on the surface and may be removed. Then dry the asphaltum, reduce it to a very

fine powder, and pass it through a fine silk sieve; this retains the silicious particles, and your asphaltum is now pure. White wax is occasionally adulterated with tallow and potato-powder. I know no means of purifying it. As for gum mastic, it requires to be carefully chosen, so as to have pure drops.

Amongst the receipts given above, it may be well to draw attention to No. 2, which, being white, allows previous work to be seen through it, and may be useful for corrections.

What I use myself for all work after the first state of a plate is Fenn's black ground, or the ground I make myself, dissolved in ether. It is true that the ground is so dark in colour, that if applied in any thickness it would hide the lines, or at least the more delicate ones; but I find that in practice the film of it is of such extreme tenuity, that it becomes quite as transparent as the best white varnish.

To prepare the solution, it is necessary to make much more of it than you are likely to want, to be liberal with the ether, and break the etching ground into small fragments before you put it in the bottle. Shake the bottle well three or four times a day during three days, then let it remain quite undisturbed for *three weeks*. The solution will now have divided itself into two distinct parts,—a thin transparent part above, dark in colour, and a muddy part below. Pour the thin portion into another phial, taking the greatest care to let no mud pass along with it. Let this second phial rest undisturbed for three weeks more, and again decant it. You have now a solution as fluid as water, and entirely free from impurities. It is to be applied exactly as photographers apply collodion. We shall return to this subject a few pages hence.

Some etchers use the ordinary etching ground dissolved in chloroform, and also applied as collodion is. If you intend to begin your etching on a plate varnished in this way, the chloroform solution is the better of the two; but if it is for states after the first etching, it is better to use the

ether solution. There is an important difference in the preparation. Chloroform is a very heavy fluid indeed, and ether an exceedingly light one; consequently your chloroform solution will not clear itself of impurities as did your ether solution, and you must filter it twice through fine muslin before it can be relied upon.

I find with reference to both these solutions that they do not dry so quickly as might be expected. In both cases a plate requires at least twelve hours' rest before the varnish really solidifies. A delusive drying takes place immediately, but the student is not recommended to trust to it.

The variety of receipts given above is of itself enough to show that there is no rigid and exclusive rule about the composition of etching grounds. The object being merely to protect the plate against the acid, and yet allow the easy passage of a needle, many substances fulfil these conditions. Even common turpentine, applied as collodion, leaves a thin film, which when dry sufficiently resists a slow mordant without the addition of a single ingredient. I have no doubt that many other substances, besides those mentioned here, would answer as well as the grounds most in repute. A fluid ground which would solidify immediately, in a quite satisfactory manner, is still a desideratum.

We have now to consider what are the best varnishes for stopping out,—that is, for protecting parts already engraved and which are not to be bitten farther. Street's Brunswick black is generally used for this purpose in England, and is excellent. Japan varnish, such as is used by carriage-builders, is equally good. Both these varnishes dry rapidly, a matter of great importance, as a rapid drier saves time. I have often used printer's ink, which resists acid without drying at all, but it cannot be applied very delicately, and small portions of detail cannot be separately stopped out with it. The following varnishes have been used in France:—

Stopping-out Varnish 1. — White wax, 60 grammes; asphaltum, 60 gr.; gum mastic, 60 gr.; turpentine, 500 gr.

Stopping-out Varnish 2. — White wax, 30 grammes; asphaltum, 45 gr.; turpentine, 240 gr.

Stopping-out Varnish 3. — White wax, 8 grammes; asphaltum, 30 gr.; gum mastic, 4 gr.; turpentine, 240 gr.

These have all to be filtered, and, if too thick, may be diluted with turpentine. They are applied with camel-hair brushes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACID BATH.

THE acid commonly used for biting a copper-plate is nitric acid at 40 degrees. It is mixed with an equal quantity of water.

Mr. Haden's bath, which is very slow in operation, is composed of two parts of chlorate of potash, ten of hydrochloric acid, and eighty-eight of water. To make a litre of it we should therefore take—

Chlorate of potash, 20 grammes; hydrochloric acid, 100 gr.; water, 880 gr. Total, 1,000 gr. = 1 litre.

It is said that the old etchers often used nothing but very strong vinegar and common salt. I have not tried this mixture.

The following receipt is by M. Perrot, as a mordant used in the old-fashioned hard-varnish etching:—

White vinegar, as strong and pure as possible, 3,000 grammes; salt of ammonia, white and clear, 180 gr.; common salt, very pure, 180 gr.; verdigris, pure and dry, 210 gr.

For etching on steel, nitric acid is used, and a good proportion is one part of acid to four parts of water.

It is scarcely necessary to say that these baths should always be kept in stoppered bottles.

CHAPTER V.

THE ETCHING-ROOM AND ITS FURNITURE.

THE great enemy of an etcher being dust, the room where he works should be as simple and naked as possible; there should be neither carpet nor curtain, and the furniture should consist of two large and heavy tables, a set of small drawers, a chair, and a printing press. One of these tables should be reserved for etching, and the other for operations connected with printing. These tables should be from six to eight feet long and about three feet broad; if they are furnished with drawers, they will be useful. A frame 36 in. by 30 in. and covered with tracing paper, is necessary to moderate the light.

The press is so very desirable that no etcher ought to be without one. The habit of frequently taking proofs advances an etcher in his art, and in this sense it is not too much to say that the press is a silent but severe master, always ready to point out the defects of our work, or to encourage us when we deserve it. For etchers who live in the country a press is especially necessary; the delays caused by sending plates to town every time that a proof is wanted are so annoying as to become in time almost insupportable, and lead to a despairing abandonment of correction. When an etcher knows that he will be able to ascertain at once what has been the effect of a retouching, he retouches often and caresses his plate, bringing it at last near enough to perfection to represent him fairly; but when, on the other hand, after every correction he has the trouble of packing his plate up in a parcel and sending it to London, and the vexation of waiting until the printer, in his good pleasure, returns the plate with a proof, then there

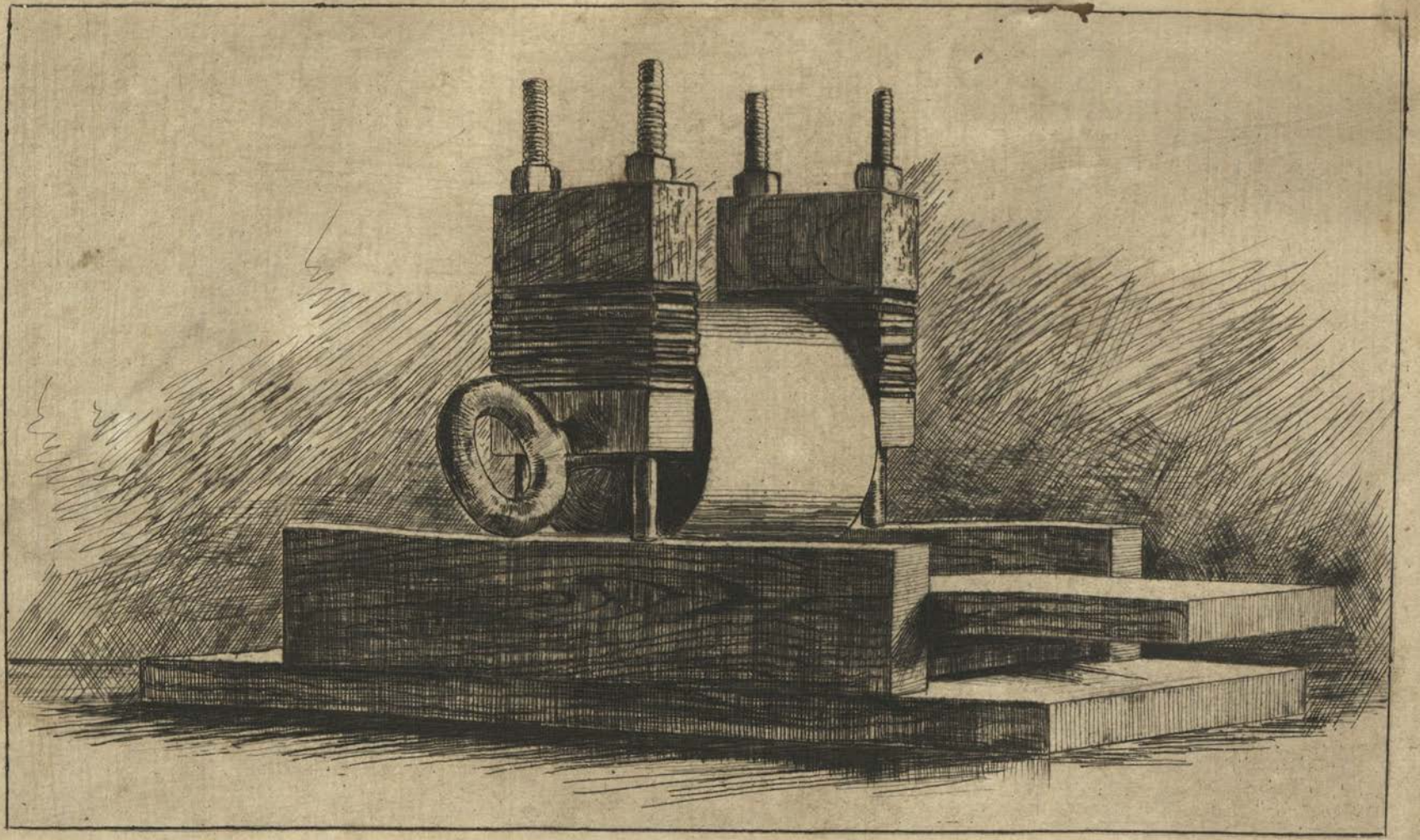
arises a natural disposition to be contented with defective work, or with work that might be bettered; and this disposition constantly strengthens with habit, so that in time an etcher far from a press no longer attempts to make the most of his work.

During the progress of this work I have made experiments in the construction of presses, with a view to greater economy and convenience. The usual copper-plate press is not only expensive, but it is an encumbrance; it cannot either be placed in an ordinary room or packed in a portmanteau.

After several experiments, with which it is not necessary to trouble the reader, as they were failures, I succeeded in making a press at a cost of two pounds, which yields perfect proofs, may be always relied upon, and is small enough to be set on a chimney-piece, or packed in a box. I then made a press for sixteen shillings, which gave equally good proofs, but was rather less convenient in the working. Ordinary proofs from these presses were accepted by M. Delâtre as irreproachable, and he said in a letter, that if I wanted a certificate of the excellence of the presses, he was ready to give me one. It would certainly be possible to make a press, on the same principles, which should be still more portable, but it would scarcely be possible to make one either cheaper or more reliable.

Without, however, for the present, speculating on what *might* be done, let me describe what *has* been done. The press, of which a drawing is given opposite, cost less than two pounds, and gives proofs equal to any printed with the usual expensive machine. It can be carried from room to room with one hand, is sometimes on a table or under it, sometimes on a chair, and at the present moment happens to be on a chimney-piece.

It will give a proof of a plate 6 inches by 12, without margin, of course (but this, for proving a plate, is not of the least consequence, as the proof may be



mounted afterwards), and a plate 6 inches by 12 is quite large enough for most etchers. The parts of the press are as follow:—First, a plain oak-board, 24 inches long, 9 inches broad, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches thick: this is the basis of the structure and the floor on which the small rollers run. Next, we have two walls of oak, 16 inches long, 4 inches high, and $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches thick. These are set up on each side the flat board, placed *upon* it and on their edge, so as to be at the side of the board, and at 4 inches from each end of it. They are firmly glued and screwed in this position. Next, we have a set of four small rollers, simple cylinders of any hard wood, accurately turned, and measuring 5 inches long by 1 inch in diameter. It is necessary to have a small frame of wood, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $6\frac{1}{8}$ inches broad, outside measure, the wood of the frame being three-quarters of an inch deep and half an inch thick. The four small rollers are screwed inside the frame, the purpose of which is simply to keep them at the regular distance from each other, screwed, of course, so as to leave them perfect liberty of motion. The distance between the rollers should be $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

This set of small rollers, with their frame, is placed on the flat board, and upon the rollers is laid another board which is to bear the plate. This travelling-board should be of oak, and of the following dimensions:—Length, 18 inches; breadth, $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches; thickness, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

We have next to consider the great cylinder, 6 inches in diameter and $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, but as this is a compound affair it must be described constructively.

First, a *square* bar of iron, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches square and 9 inches long, to one end of which must be welded a large ring (better take a bar long enough to allow for the ring), which ring should have an inside diameter of $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and a thickness, in the iron itself, of three-quarters of an inch. The bar with its ring must now be sent to the turner, and the bar must be carefully turned round in two places, corresponding to the two walls of the press,—that is, first,

$1\frac{3}{8}$ inches of it at the ringless end, after which it is left square for $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and then rounded to the ring. When thus finished, the axle is taken to a common joiner, who will build four pieces of oak about it, thus: first, a piece under it, $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$; one on each side of it, $1\frac{1}{2}$ by $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$; and a piece above it, $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$; glueing these all well together so as to fix the axle in the middle of a block of wood measuring $6\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$. This composite block must now be taken to a turner in wood, who will make a cylinder of it 6 inches in diameter (if a little less, it is of no consequence) and $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, with the round iron axle projecting $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches at each end, and a large ring at one end.

We now need four iron bolts with square heads, and nuts, and washers. These bolts may be half-an-inch thick, and 16 inches long, with $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches of screw. They have their flat heads sunk under the floor of the press, and pass through holes in its vertical walls; they then pass through an iron saddle, through twenty thicknesses of cork-packing, and through a cross-piece of oak, which things remain to be described.

First, the saddles. They are simply oblong pieces of iron, 6 by $1\frac{1}{2}$ by $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches. They are set on edge, and in their under edge is hollowed a small arch to receive the axle of the cylinder; but the arch must be rather wider than the axle, or else it would not work so freely. Then twenty strips of cork of the thickness used for putting inside shoes, and measuring 6 inches by $1\frac{3}{8}$. Finally, two cross-pieces of oak 6 by $1\frac{3}{8}$ by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Holes are bored through all these, so that the bolts may pass, and the nuts are screwed till a sufficient pressure is obtained. The cork-packing is for elasticity, and I find it preferable to cardboard because less of it is needed. To work the press, you insert any strong stick in the ring, and so get the leverage you need. The press should be fastened to the table or chimney-piece, by any temporary arrangement, such as joiners use in the progress of their work.

I found that it reduced the expense by half to have no iron axle or ring, but simple projections of wood, 2 inches in diameter. In this cheapest press the leverage was obtained by boring a large hole in the middle of the roller itself, and inserting a stout stick with which the roller was turned. This plan gave as good proofs as any, and was extremely economical, doing away with all iron work except the bolts, but it is much less convenient than the ring-system, and to take proofs from large plates requires a roller 8 inches in diameter.

A Lilliputian press might be made on the ring-system for small etchings, and a tourist who etches might easily take it with him in his portmanteau. Strength of pressure does not depend on the size of the press, but on the tightness of the screws, and the smallness of a cylinder is of little consequence if it is only accurately turned. A press large enough to print a plate 6 inches by 3 (the size of my Voudenay and Laboulaye in this volume) might be made small enough to be a mere toy, and yet strong enough and accurate enough to yield the most perfect proofs imaginable. A very stout walking-stick is a portable kind of lever, but any strong stick will do.

The qualities of a good press are, to have true motion, strong pressure, and the least possible friction. The system of using small travelling-rollers under the board instead of two fixed cylinders, is good, because it diminishes friction and adds to the certainty of work. If the axles are small, and the arches of the saddles large, so that the axle only touches the saddle in a narrow line, the friction will not be great. The degree of friction which there is may be easily overcome by the immense leverage of the stick.*

* Mr. Roberson, my colourman, of 99, Long Acre, is now making, under my direction, a complete Etcher's Box, including a miniature press and everything else necessary both for etching and printing. Readers would save themselves much trouble by applying to him.

The following is a list of the materials required in an etching-room where proofs are taken :—

1. Copper plates.

2. A hand-vice with wooden handle.

3. Etching-ground, in balls about an inch in diameter. These should be wrapped in black silk.

4. Street's Brunswick black, or Japan varnish, or one of the other stopping-out varnishes, in a stoppered bottle.

5. Sable or camel-hair brushes of different sizes.

6. Dabbers. The best way to make a dabber is as follows :—Have some horse-hair, some cotton-wool, and a piece of kid-leather. Lay the cotton-wool on the leather, first, in a circular shape about four inches in diameter, then lay a good heap of well-separated horse-hair upon this. Draw the leather up all round and force the materials inside into rather a flat shape. Tie the leather together, binding it with waxed thread, and cut off the superfluous leather. A dabber of this kind may be cleaned with turpentine, or you may put a silk cover on it and renew the cover as often as you please, without making a new dabber. The use of the cotton is to give evenness of soft surface, and that of the horse-hair to give elasticity. Dabbers so made, last any length of time. They must be kept most scrupulously clean, and in a box of their own.

7. Smoking-tapers. What are called "cellar rats" in France are the best for this purpose. To make them, twist eight cotton threads rather loosely together, and dip them twice or three times in molten beeswax. Twist a dozen of these dips together, warming them in warm water to enable you to do it without breaking them.

8. A holder for smoking. A conical vessel of copper or tin, exactly like a gigantic extinguisher. You stick the smoking-taper in this, and it prevents the molten wax from running on your fingers.

9. A set of etching needles. See Chapter II.

10. A burnisher. This is a smooth steel instrument

used for polishing copper by friction and pressure. It must be kept entirely free from scratches, or rust-pits.

11. A piece of deal with two grooves in it the size of your burnisher. In one of these keep a little emery powder, in the other some tripoli and oil. By rubbing your burnisher backwards and forwards in these grooves, you will keep it bright.

12. A scraper. This is a three-edged tool, and its edges have to be kept very sharp.

13. A good oil-stone to sharpen your scraper upon.

14. An engraver's magnifying glass.

15. One or two photographer's trays in porcelain for the acid bath.

16. A sufficient supply of bottles with glass stoppers for acid baths, ether solution, chloroform solution, &c.

17. A supply of chemicals. Nitric acid, hydrochloric acid, chlorate of potash, ether, chloroform, an abundant supply of turpentine, the materials for making grounds, &c., olive oil.

18. Finger-gloves in india-rubber.

19. Willow charcoal. This being absolutely necessary, if you cannot buy it you must make it. Take thick sticks of willow, remove the bark, cut them into short lengths, lay them on the ground in a little stack, and cover them entirely with red-hot wood-cinders, and on the cinders heap wood-ashes so that no air can get to them. Leave them there an hour and a quarter or an hour and a half, according to the thickness of the sticks; then take them out and throw them into cold water.

20. Tracing paper.

21. Emery paper, the very finest you can get.

22. Plenty of good blotting paper, soft and thick.

23. A roller for revarnishing. This is used for rebiting.

24. A looking-glass for reversing.

What follows concerns the printing.

25. If the etcher has no press, he may take proofs in plaster of Paris. The plaster must be new, and kept in a

closed tin box. When it has absorbed moisture from the air, it soon loses its power of setting.

26. Printing ink. A special kind of ink is made for plate printing: typographic printing-ink will not do for this purpose. It is as well to get your ink ready-made from some experienced printer, or from Mr. Roberson, the colourman, 99, Long Acre.

27. A dabber made of cloth rolled into a cylindrical shape, and firmly bound round with waxed thread. The edges of the cloth take the ink, and the dabber is held as you hold a tumbler-glass. This dabber may be about the size of a pint bottle.

28. A plentiful supply of muslin of two kinds, stiff muslin, very coarse indeed, and very fine muslin; in short, the two extremes of coarseness and fineness in muslin. You want a great deal of the coarse and a little of the fine.

29. A box of sheet iron, three feet long by two wide, and eight inches deep. This is to be kept gently heated, so that you can just bear your hand pleasantly upon it, yet so that if it were a very little hotter you would take your hand away. This box is put on your table: in France it is heated with a brazier of charcoal, which is put inside; in England you may use gas, or hot bricks.

30. A supply of paper for printing. For some reason not very clear, but which no doubt has its foundation in the depths of artistic feeling, etchers differ very much from other people in their taste about paper. More will be said on the subject when we come to the printing; for the present it may be observed that any paper which is good for water-colour drawing will yield a fair proof of an etching. Some of the best proofs I ever took were on a Dutch paper, sold in the shops for water-colour; and the paper which in early experiments I found to answer best for my own press, was a thick, rather coarse water-colour paper made in England. Soft thick plate-paper is perhaps the easiest for a beginner to use.

31. A marble slab and muller for printer's ink. A knife for the same purpose, like a large palette knife.

32. The very finest whitening.

33. A sponge to damp paper.

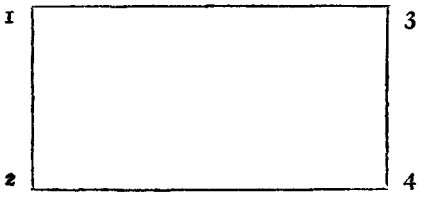
34. A flat brush, like a clothes-brush, to brush paper.

CHAPTER VI.

LAYING THE GROUND.

IF you employ the chloroform solution, you have to do exactly what a photographer does when he covers a glass plate with collodion. This is not quite so easy as it looks, and requires some practice. If you do it badly, the fault will either be a want of covering on some part of the plate, or the solution will run twice over the same place and produce a double thickness. In either case, of course, the plate must be cleaned and revarnished. A useful instrument for this process is the pneumatic plate-holder, which may be had of the photographic opticians. It consists of a disc of vulcanized india-rubber, with a rivet in the middle, and a handle with a screw in it. On turning the screw the disc is raised in the middle by a little piston connected with the screw, and a small vacuum is produced sufficient to attach the holder powerfully to the plate. Fasten this to the under side of the plate, and hold it with the polished side uppermost. Then pour your solution in the middle of the plate till it makes a large circle, and, by inclining the plate in different directions, cause the varnish to flow rapidly over the whole surface of it, to the corners 1, 2, 3, and 4, in the order in which they are numbered (see next page). Then let the superfluous varnish flow off quickly at 4 into the bottle; after which, keeping 4 still in the neck of the

bottle, move the plate rapidly, so that first the line 2, 4, shall be perpendicular, and then 3, 4. Repeat this movement half a dozen times. If you have been skilful, you will now have a perfectly even coat of varnish all over your plate.



Whatever ground you lay, it is of great importance that the plate should be perfectly clean, quite free from grease and dust. If there is grease, your lines will not always bite; if there is dust, your lines will be broken by spots. There are several ways of cleaning a plate. Whitening is good for this purpose, so are scrapings of slate, or fine powder of willow charcoal. After trying various things, I find nothing better than rubbing with a large piece of charcoal under water, taking care to wipe the plate afterwards with a perfectly clean cloth. You have then, for a short time, a new surface of copper, without any grease. As for dust, it must be your constant care to exclude it from the room where you work. If you have been busy in your etching-room, and have probably made dust there, it will be better to lay your ground in some other room, where nobody has been for twenty-four hours—a vacant spare bed-room, for instance. If you will not pay attention to little things of this kind, you will have the annoyance of finding imperfections in the bitten plate.

It is a saving of time to lay the ground on several plates at once. If you use the solid ground, heat the box of sheet iron, that you use for printing, beyond the usual heat, and lay your plates upon it.* Having wrapped your ball of composition in silk, rub it on a hot plate; and if the ground melts freely through the silk, but does not bubble and burn,

* Or, heat them over a spirit-lamp, holding them in the hand-vice.

then you may know that you have the right degree of heat. If there is any bubbling,—that is, if the melted ground *boils*,—there is nothing to be done but to clean the plate again, and let it cool a little.

It does not in the least signify whether you lay the ground evenly or not, the dabber will make it even. As for quantity, lay less than what you think you will need; you will probably find it enough.

You now require the small hand-vice. Draw your plate to the edge of the iron table, and take hold of it with the vice, somewhere on the margin, taking care, of course, to insert a small piece of leather or paper on the polished side, to prevent the rough inside of the vice from marking the plate. Having firmly screwed the vice, you hold the plate by means of it in the left hand, and spread the ground evenly with the dabber. The plate should now be of rather a deep golden colour, not dark brown, or black. The dabbing must be done in little perpendicular strokes. If there is too much ground, take a second dabber; and if still too much, a third.* If there is too little, add some more whilst the plate is hot.

This golden colour that you have now got is pretty enough, but it would not be quite so convenient to etch in as a ground of a darker colour, because you could not see the lines so well. To darken the ground we must add some lamp-black. The most convenient way to do this is by smoking the plate.

If the plate has now cooled, as is very possible, it must be heated again before you attempt to smoke it. Hold it up in the left hand with the varnished side downwards, above the level of your eye; now take the lighted smoking-taper in your right hand, and gently pass it under the whole plate, not near enough to burn the ground; repeat this till

* Or, wipe your dabber with the coarse muslin used in printing, over and over again till the ground on the plate is diminished to the right thickness. A kid leather dabber, not covered with silk, is easily kept clean in this way: nothing cleans it so well as the said coarse muslin.

the ground is quite black. If the smoking has been well done, the plate will be bright and even: if the ground has been burned, there will be dull places: if there has been dust, you will now see it, only too clearly, fixed in the composition.

You may smoke a chloroform or ether ground, but I find that when the varnish is so extremely thin, it does not take the smoke perfectly; either it is half smoked, and so not black, or if it is really black, there is too much lamp-black in proportion to the composition, and its quality is deteriorated, so that it becomes difficult to make very sound lines in it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST STATE—BITING.

THE plate is now ready to be drawn upon with the point. For your own guidance you will do well to sketch the subject first in white chalk, which is best done as follows. Rub some chalk on a piece of tracing-paper larger than your plate, lay it with the chalked side downwards on the plate, and fold the margin of paper under it. Then sketch your subject lightly, with a soft black-lead pencil, on the tracing-paper. Remove the paper, and you will find your subject sketched in white chalk on the black ground. Brush this delicately away with a large camel-hair brush till nothing remains but a faint indication sufficient to guide you.

The great business of doing the etching is too complicated a matter to be treated of in this place. It includes all sorts of questions about the interpretation of nature, which we must allow to stand over for the present. Let us suppose it to be understood that the etcher does his work as it ought to be done.

Something was said about Mr. Haden's process, and the receipt for his acid bath has been given. This process consists in doing the etching whilst the plate is in the bath; for this purpose a hollow well is excavated in the middle of a drawing-board which is painted with Brunswick black, or Japan varnish, or a solution of black sealing-wax in spirits of wine. The back of the plate is then varnished with Street's Brunswick black, or any other stopping-out varnish, and when it is dry it is laid in the hollow in the drawing-board, which is filled with Mr. Haden's acid mixture. This mordant is so slow that the artist has four hours before him, and can make a careful sketch. He rests his hand on a flat piece of wood that bridges the bath, and works on the immersed plate exactly as if it were dry—with the difference, that he is now obliged to begin with the lines which he intends to be darkest, going gradually to the lighter ones, and reserving the lightest of all for his last touches. The reason for this is evident. A line is deepened in proportion to the length of time it remains in the bath, and a line that has been exposed for hours to the action of the acid will be a dark line in the printing, whereas lines made towards the close of the sitting are sure to be pale. Between these there is every gradation of dark.

I find that most etchers of the old school are disposed to regard this process as a wild idea, scarcely deserving serious consideration. In this estimate they are certainly wrong, because the process has claims of its own, and can reach results peculiar to itself. We cannot, by separate bitings and stoppings-out, reach the gradated variety of biting which this process gives. But it is not well suited for inexperienced etchers, nor for etchers who finish painfully, and cannot arrive at a satisfactory result without taking several proofs during the progress of the plate. The necessity for always thinking what is to be the value of a line before it is laid is not a light matter for a young etcher, and the work already done darkens under the action of

the acid, till it is not easy to remember the true relation between the powerful earlier lines, which look so weak and dull, and the feebler later ones, which seem so brilliant. As the etching proceeds, the earlier work becomes more and more obscure, till at last it almost loses itself in the dark ground; and if you want to work upon it with lighter tones, it becomes difficult to see the limits of it.* A curious phenomenon may be noticed in connexion with this. When the earlier work is unpleasantly obscure, it may be temporarily brightened by putting the point of the needle in contact with the copper. Probably a galvanic action results from the contact of the two metals in the acid; there is certainly a deposit of copper upon the steel, and the lines, in a radius of an inch all round the point, suddenly brighten as the surface particles leave them.

If the reader decides to attempt Mr. Haden's process, he must remember that his mordant produces no ebullition, and is very safe and regular in its action; that there is no need for hurry, but the greatest need for care and deliberation. It may be well to observe that differences of weight have a tendency to lose themselves in time, so that all the work done in the first hour will seem much more nearly of one strength than the work done in the last hour. It is wise, therefore, to make reserves in consideration of this, and not to expect too much variety from the arrangement of the first hour's work, nor too much uniformity from that of the last. The great difficulty of this process is this double difficulty of reaching variety early, and uniformity late in the work. If light tints are to be applied at last, they must be laid on rapidly, or they will be darker in parts than is desirable. Notwithstanding the objections just enumerated, we may accept Mr. Haden's idea as sound and practicable, but the full development of it must be left to the future. Some aquafortist, devoted

* This occurs with Mr. Haden's mordant, but if you use a weak dilution of nitric acid you will easily see the work already done.

P.G. Hamerton

especially to this method, will no doubt ultimately prove its capabilities.*

Mr. Haden relieves etchers from the trouble of stopping-out. A plan of my own does so equally well, and is more within the reach of ordinary practitioners. If you etch out of the bath, cut the darkest lines first, then dip the plate into the bath for a quarter of an hour, or any other interval that you require; you may resume work without stopping-out, and, by repeating this alternation of working and immersion, arrive at last at the faintest tones without having once stopped-out. Here is a decided economy of time over the ordinary method, and many of the objections to Mr. Haden's plan are obviated. By making the earlier bitings long you may get variety there, and a variety that will be visible at the end; by making the later bitings short, you may reach whatever degree of uniformity in colour you may desire. Having full command of time whilst you work on the plate, you need never slight a passage from apprehensions about over-biting; and having equal command over the periods of immersion, you need not fear involuntary blendings of what you desire to appear as distinct weights of colour. If you work in this way from nature, it will be better to employ the old-fashioned nitric bath than Mr. Haden's mixture, because you will need a more rapid action.

Finally, we come to the usual way, which includes the trouble of stopping-out. According to this system you etch the whole plate at once, or nearly so, merely reserving some delicate tones for later etching or the dry point. Having painted the back of your plate with Brunswick black, you immerse it only just long enough for the corrosion of its faintest lines. You then remove it, dry it with blotting-paper, and with a small finely-pointed camel-hair pencil *stop-out* all these lines that are not to be bitten

* The plate of the "Towers of Autun," given opposite, was etched entirely in the acid, and I now etch in the acid habitually.

any farther. A second immersion is followed by the stopping-out of parts that are to be a little darker, and so you proceed, by alternate immersions and stoppings-out, till at last nothing is left visible but the darkest passages of the foreground; and when these have been bitten, you put the plate in a bath of pure turpentine, which dissolves both the varnish and the ground, and you have the plate in what is technically known as *the first state.*

The difficulty of stopping-out, and the great objection to it, is that there are often passages of extreme intricacy, as for instance a sky behind the branches of trees, which cannot be properly stopped-out unless at the cost of immense patience and labour. The consequence is, that these are either reserved for addition in subsequent states of the plate, or else inefficiently done; for it seldom happens that an etcher will spend the time necessary to stop out such passages with the care they require. Whatever varnish is used for stopping-out, but especially if Brunswick black or japan is employed, it is a good precaution *never to dilute.* Take a drop of the varnish on a piece of paper, fresh from the bottle, use a perfectly clean camel-hair or sable brush, and, when the varnish begins to be too thick to work pleasantly, throw away the piece of paper and take another drop in the same way, cleaning your brush at the same time in turpentine, and wiping it perfectly dry with a clean rag. The reason for this recommendation is, that varnish which has dried and been diluted several times, loses its power of solidifying with rapidity.

It is difficult to give any definite rules about the length of time necessary for biting. It always goes on much more rapidly in hot weather than in cold, and the quality of the metal would have to enter into the calculation. Whatever the bath employed, there may be differences in the quality of chemicals. A series of experiments, conducted with reference to biting only, and in which all the details of temperature, strength of acid,

quality of copper, were carefully noted, would teach the etcher more than any amount of printed counsel. When etchers have had a great deal of practice, they seldom make important mistakes in biting, but no quantity of advice can save a young etcher from such mistakes. The right temper for a beginner is a quiet assurance that he will make many blunders, but that every one of these blunders, if carefully observed and attended to, will be a valuable addition to his knowledge.

I see that my friend Lalanne, in alluding to Haden's process, says, that a plate etched in the acid is bitten *five or six times* sooner than one etched first and bitten afterwards. This is pure imagination, and the reader need not be troubled by it, if he has Lalanne's book. A line etched in acid and a line etched out of it are bitten in precisely the same length of time, if the acid has the same strength in both cases, and the temperature is equal.* Three little things remain to be mentioned, but as success depends upon little things, they must not be omitted.

Whilst you etch, a small quantity of etching ground is detached at every stroke of the needle, and this remains on the plate. You may feel tempted to clear it away with the little finger; if you do this, the probability is that some particles will choke the line somewhere, and stick there, so that there may be interruptions in the biting of the line. These detached fragments of ground should be removed with a broad flat camel-hair brush, kept perfectly clean for the purpose.

When you bite a plate with nitric acid, small bubbles of gas arise in the lines. If you leave these undisturbed, they will cause interruptions in the lines, because where the gas-bubble protects the copper, the acid no longer bites. It is therefore necessary, in using the nitric bath, to remove these bubbles continually with a small feather.

* Except so far as the steel-needle may remove copper from the lines by galvanic action, but the quantity so removed is not great enough to amount to a perceptible practical inconvenience.

In etching there should be no inequality of pressure. Whether a line is intended to be dark or light, it should be boldly cleared of ground down to the bare copper, but no more. When a line varies in pressure, there may be parts of it in which the ground has not been altogether cleared away, though it seems so to the eye; the acid acts much more certainly than our easily-deceived eyes, and fails to corrode if there is the least protection. Hence you you not unfrequently find *rotten* lines in etching, even in etchings by the best masters.

Another case of rotten lines is grease on the plate when the ground was laid; the way of removing this has already been indicated,—namely, by willow charcoal and water.

It is scarcely necessary to explain that a rotten line, in the language of artists, means a line in which involuntary breaks occur. They are exceedingly common in some processes, which have been suggested as substitutes for engraving. They are common in photo-lithography, and you meet with them frequently in graphotypes, though after careful examination into the matter I think they may be avoided in the graphotype. If proper precautions are taken, they need never occur in etching; and etchers ought to be well on their guard against them, as a most serious technical blemish, destructive to the best artistic qualities of their work.

There is a peculiarity about biting which requires to be noted. When many lines are close together, as in close shading, they bite sooner than when isolated. Biting begins in the closest work, and attacks the most isolated lines last. It creeps into some lines gradually by a sort of contagion from some piece of close shading, as an epidemic disease spreads into the thinly-peopled country from dense centres of population. This is especially observable with the old nitric bath. Mr. Haden's slow mordant seems to attack more evenly; it has time in its favour.

When the plate has been sufficiently bitten for the first state, it may be dried with blotting-paper, and laid for a

short time in a bath of turpentine. I say "a short time," because on one occasion, having left plates in a turpentine bath all night, I found them slightly corroded. This must have been due to a disengagement of acid from the varnish, as I am not aware that pure turpentine will, of itself, corrode copper.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER STATES.

WHEN your plate emerges from the turpentine bath, clean it thoroughly with pure turpentine from the bottle, then rub it with fine whitening to get rid of the turpentine, and with bread to get rid of the whitening. After this the plate is ready to yield a first proof. (*See* PRINTING.)

Your proof being taken, it is extremely probable that you will discover many deficiencies in your plate; there will be spaces left involuntarily open, and in general there will be about a quarter of the work that you imagined you had put into it. Let us suppose, first, that the only fault of your performance is insufficiency of labour. You have now to revarnish it with white varnish.

This may be done either with white etching-ground in the solid form (*see* Ground 2, Chapter III.), or with the solution of common black etching-ground in ether. The latter is by far the better system of the two, being incomparably more rapid, more certain of reaching absolute equality of thickness, and more convenient. The greatest care must be taken to have the phial in which the solution is kept perfectly dry when first filled, because the minutest particles of water will ruin your etching by pitting. These watery particles exist afterwards in the ether solution in the form of almost imperceptible globules; and wherever one of these globules occurs on your plate, the resinous ground is not deposited, the water dries, and, in drying, leaves the copper

bare to the action of the acid, which of course digs a pit there, and this pit is a black spot on every proof.

Having covered your plate with ether solution in the manner already described (Chapter VI.), let it remain undisturbed for twelve hours, then expose it to a gentle heat, rising from below—the heat of a spirit-lamp is as good as any, because so free from dust. As soon as the coat of varnish melts, which you will know at once by its becoming transparent, remove the plate and let it cool. The advantage of this is that the varnish retains this transparency after cooling, and the particles which were held in solution in the ether are now still more intimately blended. You have now a coat so absolutely even that the needle will meet no difference of depth anywhere, and at the same time so transparent, that any one but an etcher would suppose the bright copper to be bare. The next thing, of course, is to paint the back of the plate with Brunswick black.

In the work now to be added, there is a certain advantage in using Mr. Haden's bath, and etching in the acid. If you etch out of acid, you will have a difficulty in seeing what you have done: if, on the other hand, you etch in the acid, you will see every line after two minutes, and, what is more, you will see it in *positive*, for the action of the acid darkens it so, that it looks like a proof from the etching, except that the lines are paler than the printed lines will be. With white varnish the inconveniences of working in the bath are precisely the converse of those we complained of with the black ground. We complained then that lines already done became gradually almost invisible, the only clearly visible lines being those just executed; but in white or transparent varnish it is the lines just done which are scarcely visible, those which have been done some time being distinct and dark. The great difficulty and inconvenience of working in transparent varnish is precisely this semi-invisibility of the lines just made.

If you work out of the bath, it is a good plan to lay your plate in such a position that the light falling across it

may catch the lines as you make them. In any manner of working in transparent varnish, you will find it difficult to shade quite regularly; lines will come nearer sometimes, or spaces be larger, than you desire.

If the main lines have already been deeply bitten in the first biting, you will be able to find your way in a black ground, and may lay the common ground and smoke it, as if you were beginning a new plate. The sunken lines will still be visible, and you may etch in your new work amongst them. But you will not find this system practicable over delicate and slightly bitten work.

If the plate has generally been executed as you desire, but lacks depth in biting, it may be rebitten by protecting only the smooth parts with varnish, leaving the lines open. The plate must be thoroughly well cleaned with whitening and bread, so as to be free from the smallest particle of varnish or ink, or grease of any kind; then lay a ground on another plate, take a perfectly clean and very well-made dabber, and, whilst the ground is kept hot, gently transfer it to the etched plate (which must be moderately heated also) by gentle dabs all over it, never pressing hard enough to fill the lines nor rubbing the dabber from side to side. If you do this with the requisite skill, you will fill up none but the very finest lines, and having as usual revarnished the back of your plate, you may boldly put it again into the acid bath, and leave it there long enough to get the force it lacked. The dabber may be advantageously replaced by a small roller,* which must be a perfect cylinder of any fine-grained wood, covered quite evenly with the finest kid leather. With this you take up a small quantity of ground from the other plate, and apply it by passing the roller in various directions over your etched copper. The process of varnishing for rebiting is, however, rather difficult and hazardous; and in Paris, where as in all great capitals specialities are subdivided to the greatest extent, this has become

* If your plate is perfectly flat, but not if there is the least inequality of surface.

a profession of itself, and there is a skilful man who does nothing else, to whom etchers send their plates. He simply lays the ground, and the rebiting is done afterwards by the aquafortist.

A great charm is often given to a hard or dry etching by adding tints with the dry point. This is merely the etching needle very well sharpened* and used as an engraving tool without varnish or acid. It is necessary here to insist upon a very important distinction in the use of the dry point.

First, you may rely upon the scratch only, removing the ridge of copper raised by the tool with the scraper. This ridge is technically called the *bur*. Secondly, you may rely mainly upon the bur, and either not remove it at all, or only partially remove it. These two methods are wholly distinct, so as to form in reality two entirely different arts.

When you use the dry point as an auxiliary to etching, it is better, as a general rule, to count upon the scratch or furrow only, and remove the bur as cleanly as possible. This is because in the printing the bur goes fast, being rapidly worn away, whereas the furrow lasts as long as an etched line. The invention of steeling has, however, in a great measure removed this difficulty; and if the etcher has his plate steeled before any copies are printed, he may now rely upon bur. Working for the bur is an art of itself, and will be treated of in a separate chapter on the Dry Point, to which the reader is now referred.

Supposing that you rely on the furrow, you may get very beautiful tints, which will be of the greatest use in harmonizing your plate. It is often well to reserve delicate passages, as pure whites, to be afterwards filled in in this manner. The point requires to be frequently sharpened.

We have hitherto spoken of corrections as if everything had to be added, and nothing reduced or effaced. But some passages may have been over-bitten, and others may require to be altogether rubbed out.

* But not quite to a *rounded* point. There should be a minute cutting edge at the point.

Our great resource here is willow charcoal. The way of preparing this has been described in Chapter V. Cut it at an acute angle across the grain, and, having dropped a little olive oil upon the plate, rub the charcoal upon it so as to reduce the copper, which it will do very rapidly. Its power of taking up particles of metal is very remarkable. You cannot pass a piece of charcoal across a copper plate without its taking up metal enough to give it visible metallic lustre, and good willow charcoal does this without scratching the plate in any unpleasant degree. By perseverance you may efface in this way any passage you like, and a very moderate expenditure of labour suffices for the reduction of passages which have too much force. In cases where much copper has to be removed, and the portion of etching altogether effaced, it is an economy of time to use the scraper first, and only finish with charcoal; but where mere reduction is the object, the charcoal should be used alone, because the scraper is liable to catch in the lines and spoil their edges, thus seriously injuring their quality. Charcoal, on the other hand, reduces the surface only, and does not catch in the lines, merely filling them with its own fine black powder, which is afterwards easily removed.

CHAPTER IX.

OF OVER-CORRECTION.

THIS chapter seems to be necessary as a restraint or drawback on the foregoing one. The means of correction having now been explained, it is necessary to add here that these very facilities have been on the whole an injury to the art, and have gradually developed the worst tendencies of the modern schools.

The ideal of an etching is, that it should be free and spontaneous. When a plate has been laboriously corrected

it always shows signs of fatigue, and so loses in freshness what it may gain in delicacy or force. Many modern etchings betray immense labour in correction, and perhaps, on the whole, are little the better for it, though it may be doubted whether artists who have once got into this habit can produce anything valuable without it. Whatever may be true of poetry, the principles of Horace and Boileau may conduct an aquafortist to his ruin. It is inevitable that, in the early stages of progress, correction should be much resorted to; for inexperienced etchers are so liable to make mistakes, that they must either correct laboriously or never venture to show anything they do. But the etcher should always look upon the necessity for correction as a proof of his own weakness, and earnestly hope for the day when he may be master enough to trust his first thought and stroke. Corrections are to be admitted, and tolerated only as a concession to human weakness; and the habit of hesitating and mending—for it easily grows into a habit—must be resisted with all the energy of the will. A time arrives when the technical difficulties are sufficiently overcome to authorize the student to take some resolution of this kind: "I have tried to polish expressions hitherto, but now I will polish no more, only say simply what seems truest and best, leaving the manner of it to fortune and the inspiration of the hour." Some delicacy will remain as a result of the early polishing, and much force and directness will be gained from the new confidence in the value of the truth or emotion to be communicated. When this resolution has once been taken, it must at first be boldly adhered to, in spite of frailty and temptation. The lines must be laid with thoughtful hardihood, and left with simple humility as being what they are, the accurate measurement of the artist's force at the moment. When artists and writers work, they endeavour for the most part to look greater and mightier than they really are, or, at least, they endeavour to reach, in the common work of every day, the height rately attained by them in some seldom recurring hours of quite

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exceptional inspiration. The first effort is vanity, and the second, though not censurable, still not very wise; for it is a certain truth, that the intellect of a man does not always burn at its brightest, and further, that the expression of the brightest, hours is not the expression of the man's whole nature, any more than some glorious day in June is fairly representative of the sky and climate of England. A certain kind of self-reliance, almost approaching a conviction of his own personal value, is necessary to an aquafortist. Great things have been done in etching, which never would have been done, if the artist had timidly doubted the value of his mind's grey days and common humours. The needful elements of success in direct work of any kind are absolute sincerity and simplicity. Good etching is like good manners; it does not hesitate about what is to be said or done, and, though highly sensitive, is not painfully self-conscious: above all, it casts away affectation, the vice of the inferior arts. Etching does not condescend, and, therefore, really need not be at the trouble to polish its phrases and explain.

In etching, without correction, much may be done which is not valuable enough to be published; but if the artist is skilful this is not, comparatively, a loss of time. Correction costs so many days that the direct and rapid worker, even if he succeeds with only one plate out of four, will still have as rich a harvest as his rival who passes his time in mending ineffectual work. The amount of study gained is so much clear profit. Rubbing with charcoal, rebiting, and uniting damaged lines may be very agreeable occupations; but they certainly add nothing to our gatherings from the wealth of nature, whereas the etcher who repairs little, but studies much, is always acquiring fresh knowledge of natural beauty, though he may transfer little of it to his plates.

Even if we admit the most laborious correction, it is well to know when a plate is irretrievably ruined. It is possible to beat a child till it dies; and it is possible to chastise a plate till it has no life left in it. Now many plates in this

melancholy condition have been published by modern artists, and these plates do not well support the arguments of critics, who urge an unwilling public to admire the art especially for its vitality. When an etching has once been killed, it should be remorselessly planed off the copper, whose new surface, so bright and inviting, will be more valuable than the shattered lines.

CHAPTER X.

DRY-POINT.

DRY-POINT is not strictly etching, but engraving; however, as it is an etcher's process, it has to be treated of here.

In pure dry-point the bur is the important matter. The bur, as was explained in the eighth chapter, is the ridge of copper raised by the point as it ploughs up the surface of the plate. When this ridge is high it catches the ink of the printer, and protects it from the friction of his canvas and hand, so that all the ink is not wiped off. The difference between a dry-point when it has just been inked and an etching is that, with regard to the etching, the ink lies in its hollows only; whereas, in the case of the dry-point, there is also a good deal of ink on the surface. This ink lies behind the raised copper, exactly as snow in windy weather lies to the leeward of a hedge. It produces an appearance of wonderful richness and softness, but may easily be too rich, which is the common fault,—too *fat*, as the French say. When it is so, the remedy is not far to seek; the scraper well sharpened, and used with great caution and moderation, will reduce the bur to any degree that may be desired. In skies and distances it is often, even generally, necessary to remove the bur altogether.

L.J. Hamilton No 2
Two Stumps of Driftwood

When you have to remove the bur from lines which have to be crossed, do not wait till the second or third series of lines are laid, but scrape them as soon as each series is finished. The reason for this is, that when you remove bur your scraper ought to be at right angles with the line, and if your lines are crossed already this cannot be. A rule of this kind cannot always be strictly followed, but it is well to endeavour to observe it.

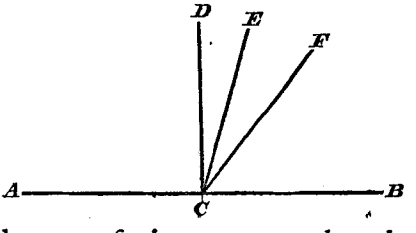
When you engrave in dry-point, it is a good plan to rub a mixture of tallow and lamp-black into the lines as you do them. This gives the effect in positive, and is almost as good as taking a proof; the black will inform you of the state of your bur, and so you will be able to remove the right quantity of it. At first you will run some risk of taking away too much. The bur is far more powerful as a retainer of black than the hollowed line, and you will find that when the bur is gone, little else, comparatively, remains.

It is not very easy, in working with the dry-point, to design free and irregular lines; but this may be done, after some practice, to a much greater extent than the reader may at first be disposed to believe. Straight lines are easily drawn, and so are delicate and rounded curves; but capricious curves that suddenly turn in various odd ways are always difficult. For instance, take such curves as manuscript is composed of. It is very easy to write free manuscript with the etching-needle: as soon as you have learned to write in reverse, you can do it just as easily on varnished copper as on a sheet of paper. But when you try to do this with the dry-point, the difficulty is almost insuperable; even the most skilful engraver could never write fast with the dry-point.

The raising of the bur does not depend simply on the amount of pressure exercised, but in no less a degree on another condition, never to be lost sight of, the angle at which the needle is held.

Let AB be the plate, and CD, CE, CF, the graver

held in different positions. With the exercise of precisely the same amount of force, a line drawn with the graver, as at CD, will be weaker than a line drawn with the graver as at CE; and CF will draw a blacker line still, because it will raise a higher bur. The inclination of the graver is, of course, always made to the right. The line AB is supposed to be the plate on which the reader is working. He is recommended to make experiments on inclination in this



way, and to take proofs in a press, that he may see the result: an hour so spent will teach him more than a page of theory. It is evident, that without knowing this fact about inclination, a dry-point engraver is always liable to unintentional variations of force if he relies upon bur for his effect. In cases where bur is not the object, inclination is of much less consequence.

Dry-point is a free and noble art as practised by etchers, but not so free as pure etching. Its superiority over etching consists in a certain velvety depth and richness of colour which pure etching cannot attain; mezzotint is the only art which rivals dry-point in this respect, and mezzotint gets the quality in the same way, namely by bur; the difference being, that in mezzotint the bur is not raised by the point of the graver, but by many little sharp teeth of a tool with which the plate is prepared. The passages of dry-points where the bur is removed have also fine qualities of tone, and surpass pure etching in a certain kind of delicacy; so that etchers reserve some passages for the dry-point. This kind of work has been called the glazing of engraving, meaning that it stands in the same relation to etching and burin work, that transparent colour in oil-painting occupies with reference to opaque.

In painter's dry-point it is, of course, just as necessary to avoid obtrusive mechanism as in pure etching. Truth and sentiment are all that the real artist troubles himself about; he leaves handling and mechanical dexterities to take care of themselves. Some line-engravers are said to have a contempt for the dry-point work of etchers, which is not unlikely; but the dry-point rightly understood is a very great art, and ought to be more cultivated than it is.

CHAPTER XI.

SOFT-GROUND ETCHING.

THERE is a kind of etching which produces a result resembling pencil-drawing. Unlike ordinary etching, this has the immense practical advantage of being a positive process, and is on that account more within the reach of students unaccustomed to work in negative.

In winter, you mix, in a glue-pan, a quantity of common etching-ground with the same quantity of tallow; in summer, with half as much; and, generally, judging by the degree of heat prevailing at the time you work, vary these proportions as you think best, and have found to be best after some experience.

With this ground, which the addition of tallow has made a soft ground, you cover your plate as with any other solid ground. You then smoke it.

You now require a sheet of very thin paper, not glazed, and having a perceptible but fine grain. Lay your plate on this with the face downwards, leaving a margin of paper all round. Paint this margin with gum or paste, and turn it on the back of the copper, so that the paper may be held firmly. The paper, on the side where the ground was

laid, is now ready to be worked upon, and you draw your subject upon it with a lead-pencil, exactly as you would draw with a lead-pencil upon paper if there were no copper plate under it. In short, you do not trouble yourself about etching in any way whatever, but think only of your pencil-drawing, except that you may not rest your hand upon the paper.

This done you remove the paper steadily and carefully, and it takes up with it a certain quantity of ground, leaving the copper nearly bare in the lines, but not quite bare, the grain of the paper having caused it to be removed partly and partly left, in a granulated way. The plate is now to be bitten and stopped out exactly in the ordinary manner, and on taking a proof you will find, if your work has been properly done, that the impression strongly resembles your pencil-drawing.

The reader is recommended to try a few experiments with different kinds of paper. It may easily happen that, if a particular paper were selected for him, it might not altogether suit his manner.

Cotman's etchings, and a few of Ruskin's, in the first edition of "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," are good examples of this kind of work. It lacks, of course, the sharpness and brilliancy of point-etching, but is capable of great power of effect. My own experience of it has been very limited, but warrants me in saying, that the process is more difficult and uncertain than at first sight it would appear. As in every other kind of etching, the inexperienced practitioner must make up his mind to a large proportion of failures.

A cause of possible confusion may here be noted. In some books on engraving, ordinary etching is called soft-ground etching, to distinguish it from etching done in a hard ground, by the old masters. This old hard ground being now disused, a modern writer may call common etching hard-ground etching, and reserve the title of soft-ground etching for that to which it is here applied.

CHAPTER XII.

PROOFS IN PLASTER AND ON WAXED PAPER.

AN etcher who has not a press at his disposal may take a tolerable proof in plaster of Paris. You ink the plate as for printing (*see* PRINTING), and then build a little wall of paper all round it, by laying the plate on a sheet of paper with a margin an inch wide, and turning the paper up, which you afterwards paste together at the four corners. Into the trough so made you pour your plaster of Paris, exactly as if you were moulding a medallion, and, when it has set, you tear away the paper and remove the copper, which will leave, or ought to leave, a clear impression of your etching in black on the white plaster. A good proof so taken is very beautiful, the plaster is so smooth and pure between the strokes, and the ink has been so well cleared out of them. But plaster is rather an inconvenient and troublesome material to use; the proofs, too, are not always successful, and when every proof is an inch thick, a few hundreds or thousands of them are not so easily stowed away as an equal number of sheets of paper. If the reader has never used plaster of Paris, it may be well to explain how it is employed. You receive it in powder, and, at the moment of using it, scatter it thinly from your hand into a basin of clear water. It settles to the bottom; allowing it to settle half a minute, you pour away the water; then stir the plaster rapidly with a piece of wood, or a spoon, and pour it on your plate. If it is good it will set in a few minutes, but plaster rapidly loses this power on exposure to the air, and does not keep well. Your plaster should never be more than three weeks old, and it ought to be kept in tin boxes that shut well

enough to exclude the air. I mentioned an inch as a suitable thickness for proofs from rather large plates; half an inch, or less, is enough for little ones. Plaster requires some considerable thickness to have any strength.

Lalanne recommends waxed paper as a material for taking proofs. According to his directions, the lines of the plate are to be filled with lamp-black (in powder, not mixed with oil); then a sheet of paper, previously covered with white wax, is to be laid on the plate with the waxed side down, and folded under it so as to be quite steady. This being done, you rub the back of the paper all over with a burnisher, and on removing it, according to M. Lalanne, you will have a proof good enough to guide you. I ought to add, however, that my own experience of this process is not very favourable. I have found it difficult to get exactly the right quantity of wax on the paper. If there was too little, the lines were not rendered; if too much, the wax stuck to the plate, and came off only in fragments. Parts of the proofs I have taken in this way have been clear and good, and I never troubled myself to contend against its difficulties; so that perhaps a little perseverance would yield fair results.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRINTING.

WHEN my largest press was first made it had two cylinders, one below the other, which is the common construction; but, as the friction was greater than was agreeable, it occurred to me to have the lower cylinder removed, and replaced by a travelling tablet on four smaller rollers. I have every reason to be satisfied with this alteration. Before it, the cloth and

paper sometimes slipped upon the plate; and though the pressure was less than it is now, the friction was twice as great. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the working of the press in its present condition: the friction is moderate, the pressure considerable, and the proof goes and returns under the cylinder without accident or embarrassment.

In getting presses of this kind made in the country, the difficulty is to meet with a turner accurate enough to turn anything like perfect cylinders; but if your workman is intelligent and careful, and if you impress it very emphatically on his mind that absolute accuracy is of importance, you will probably get a cylinder which will do your work fairly. It may be made of any hard, sound wood, perfectly seasoned. Your press should be put together so that it may be taken to pieces easily, and the cylinder released; because after a while, however dry, it will dry a little more, and become oval, so that it will have to be turned again. After a second and, perhaps, a third turning, your cylinder will keep its shape.

However great the pressure, a certain amount of elasticity must always be reserved. To effect this, we have a packing between the saddle and the cross-pieces. There is also a packing of cloths over the plate itself, so that the pressure, though immensely strong, may still be a soft pressure, and drive the paper well into the lines. It is a consequence of these packings that the absolute mathematical accuracy of the cylinder, though no doubt highly desirable, and very conducive to ease in working, is not a matter of positive necessity: it may be wrong by a millimètre, and still a tolerable proof may be taken, one quite good enough to let you know the state of the plate. A good material for the cloth-packing is fine, old broad cloth that has been worn. Pieces may be got out of a frockcoat, or an overcoat, large enough for a small press; they should be cut neatly in an oblong shape, and not less than three or four thicknesses are required. Have

a piece of string, about four feet long, with a fish-hook at one end, and a small weight at the other. When the cloths are in their right place, on the plate, throw the free ends, those in front, back over the cylinder, hook the fish-hook through all five, and let the weight hang behind the press. The advantage of this arrangement is, that it ever after lifts up your cloth for you, and so saves you the trouble of doing it.

The axle of the cylinder, if wooden, should be kept well soaped, and, generally, everything that can diminish friction should be attended to; any tightness between the cylinder and the framework of the press must be carefully avoided. The grease ordinarily used is that employed for cartwheels. I find soap much better for wooden axles.

It would be easy to contrive a miniature press, but it is a bad plan for an etcher to work habitually on a very small scale, and a tiny press would encourage the habit. With that described in Chapter V. it is possible to work with a free hand. A certain medium size is the best for an etcher: very large plates are a mistake, because it is a formidable business to fill them, and tasks of that kind are incompatible with freshness of feeling, which only too quickly evaporates. But, on the other hand, it is scarcely less a mistake to work on a minute scale, because then that freedom of stroke, which is one of the greatest charms of etching as an art, is in danger of being sacrificed to a baneful anxiety about details that cannot be clearly seen. It is more difficult to write the Lord's Prayer on a fourpenny piece than on a sheet of letter-paper, and in etching very small plates we have to contend against a like difficulty. For constant work, the smaller dimension of a plate ought not to be less than from four to five inches, whatever the other is. This supposes that no margin is left on the copper. When etching for a portable press, it is, of course, almost a necessity to sacrifice the copper margin; which, indeed, is not of much use at any time, except to engrave titles upon, and engraved lettering does not

well harmonize with etching. The name of the place, and signature of the artist, look best when freely written with his own hand in the etching ground, in some unoccupied space of the foreground itself.

The best paper in the world for printing etchings is the Japanese, but there has hitherto been a great difficulty about getting it. Etchers are a very small class, and the paper they require for the limited editions of unpopular works is so moderate in quantity, that it has never been an object with merchants to procure it for them. In 1866, M. Delâtre gave me a few sheets of Japanese paper, which were all he was able to procure in Paris, and on inquiry in London I could not get any larger quantity. When the Exhibition of 1867 was opened, one of the first things I attended to was the Japanese department, which I visited every day, in the hope of seeing some of this precious paper unpacked. At last, I beheld a small cartload of it, of the most various and beautiful qualities, some far stouter and better than any I had yet met with. Being, unhappily, ignorant of Japanese, I tried to negotiate for the purchase of this, in English and French, with Japanese exhibitors who spoke more or less of these languages, and I received a promise of sale at a reasonable price. Afterwards, this promise was evaded on various pretexts, and neither myself, nor a friend who pursued the matter after I left Paris, was ever able to procure a single ream of the paper; it had been bought in the mass, along with various other merchandise, by some merchant, whose name I have not ascertained. This is the only instance, so far as I know, of Japanese paper having been seen in any quantity, and publicly offered for sale in Europe. It is possible that, as a result of the Paris Exhibition, some Parisian dealer in Oriental curiosities may think it worth while to invest in Japanese paper; but until then, there is, I fear, little chance of a supply sufficient even for etchers. The most striking quality of Japanese paper is its exceedingly beautiful tone, something like raw

silk, but paler; yellow enough, however, to give a peculiar quality to blacks. Its surface, too, is peculiar, having a certain gloss which, by contrast, makes the black shading dull and deep, and so adds to its value. When the thinner kinds of Japanese paper are employed, it has another valuable quality, transparency. It is then mounted on Bristol board, by pasting the upper edge only, and the white of the cardboard shines through it, giving a kind of luminousness which, according to a law well known to painters, is greater than that of the opaque body from which the light comes. It acts exactly like a glaze in oil-painting. This paper is made from a tree, but my Japanese informants were not able to give the tree any European name; it is marvellously tough and strong, and when torn shows a long silky fibre.

Next to Japanese papers rank the Dutch. Those selected by etchers are usually rather thin hand-made papers, with visible wire-lines. Something in the passion for old Dutch papers is to be attributed to a seeking after the appearance of old impressions, rather than to true artistic preferences. Connoisseurs having been accustomed to see many fine old proofs on old Dutch paper have, by the association of ideas, come to cherish a passionate affection for the very paper itself, and buy it, when blank, at fancy prices. Several modern French makers, Hallines, Rives, and others, make excellent etcher's paper. This volume is printed on a hand-made paper, by Hallines, of a tone and quality which are very suitable for etchings, in spite of some impurity in the pulp. Some of the thin French papers are very good. Our own English paper-makers are, no doubt, able to make excellent etcher's papers, but there is no demand for them. Our etching clubs prefer India paper, or engraver's plate-paper, neither of which is particularly suitable for etchings.* India paper is objectionable, because it lowers the lights too much, and, though agreeable in tone, gives rather an effeminate appearance to a publication.

* A new kind of note-paper by Whatman, of rough texture, is good for etchings. I have tried it.

It may seem odd to talk of one paper, when perfectly blank, as being less interesting than another, also perfectly blank; but nobody who has studied papers will misunderstand me, when I talk of interesting papers and dull papers. Hand-made papers are generally interesting, especially when the wire-lines are left frankly visible; and machine-made papers, of equal surface and thick but weak structure, are always uninteresting. Of modern papers, I like those of Hallines best for etchings, after the Japanese, and somewhat dislike India paper, except some of a peculiarly good grey tone, which indeed is not, I believe, Indian, but Chinese. As for the plate-papers that prints are published on, they seem to me objectionable. I like to see the wire-lines on the margin of an etching, because the pressure of the plate effaces them where it has passed, and so a contrast is produced, often of the greatest value in giving serenity and space, especially to open skies.

Parchment has been employed successfully by Delâtre, but connoisseurs, especially in England, have a dislike to it, because it will not always lie flat. Another reason for this dislike may very probably be, that proofs of the old masters are not associated with parchment in the minds of connoisseurs. If all the etchings of Rembrandt and Claude, instead of being printed on paper, had been printed on parchment, the material would have been considered almost essential to a fine proof. Delâtre has certainly succeeded in producing splendid proofs on parchment, the best of which has been from the etchings by Jules Jacquemart, of the "Joyaux," in the Louvre. These proofs are distinguished by a kind of softness and richness which does not injure their precision.

Whatever paper is used, it should be adapted to the genius of the etcher. This cannot always be done when, as in this work, etchings by various masters are printed together; but when an artist chooses his own paper, he ought to choose it with especial reference to the quality of his own work. For example, in the matter of tint, a

paper which may do no harm to an etching by Landseer or Ansdell, might be too dark for one by Samuel Palmer; and a paper not at all too rough for Jongkind, might seem coarse for the small vignettes in the "Deserted Village." Even Japanese paper is not suitable for every plate, and some etchers would not, quite prudently, employ it.

An etcher ought to learn to print with a good workman. All that can be taught of the art may be communicated in a week, and the rest is an affair of natural taste and acquired experience. It is, however, certainly true that nobody can print a plate except the artist who made it, or a clever workman labouring under his direct personal superintendence, and that all printing not done under these conditions is little more than an approximation. An inexperienced etcher fancies that he has nothing to do but to send his plate to an established plate-printer, and get a proof as he would of his visiting-card. But artistic etchings and visiting-cards are very different things. What happens in the case of an etching is usually as follows. If the artist has a press of his own, he takes a set of experimental proofs, perhaps a dozen or twenty; and having got one to his satisfaction, as an expression of his idea, he signs it as the model proof, and takes it to the printer to be copied. The printer copies, perhaps unsuccessfully, for some time, and at last succeeds. On this the artist does one of two things: if he has the time and the wisdom, he will stand by the workman till every proof is taken; but if he has not the time, he will go away, earnestly desiring that the workman may keep up to the model, but feeling by no means sure of it. If an artist has to stand by until every proof is taken, it is evident that he might as well print them himself, and, indeed, this is what every etcher ought to do, except for large editions of book-illustrations, which would encroach too seriously upon his time.

I am not personally acquainted with any English printer who has been accustomed to print etchings, and therefore cannot, from my own experience, recommend one as a

master. I learned to print with Delâtre, and shall have something to say of his work; but for English printers I have to rely on the opinion of others. A distinguished artist, whose contribution is one of the brightest ornaments of this volume, wrote to me as follows :—

"In case you have not decided upon a printer, or are in search of one, I mention Mr. George Martin, successor to Gad and Kenningale, 83, Hampstead Road, N.W. I should hardly like to take the responsibility of naming any one in a matter of such importance as the printing of etchings for your work, but will just state the facts. Messrs. Gad and Kenningale were of the old painstaking school. They printed Rogers' 'Italy,' and Mr. Rogers used to come and sometimes stay by the hour, watching Mr. Gad's proving operations. Mr. Gad printed all the earlier Etching Club works, and had a sort of continual schooling from the artists. George Martin is not only Mr. Gad's successor, but an old apprentice of his. He seems to take proofs as well as his master, and I named him to the Etching Club, and he printed half our last Club work, quite, I think, to the satisfaction of the members. I think he could print my own etchings better than any one else. Of two things I feel sure, that he will not hurry his work, and that he will take his best pains with anything which requires artistic treatment; I mean artistic delicacy of handling."

Of my own master in printing, Auguste Delâtre, the reader may judge by the illustrations to this volume, which are printed by him. He is an artist in feeling, and, as a practical aquafortist, has given evidence of the possession of a natural faculty which the exigencies of business have not allowed him time to develop.* His fault is towards over-printing, so that he hardly *can* print simply, even when a plate requires it, and his workmen have all got the habit of what may be called interpretative printing, which is good when the printer thoroughly understands

* I give a dry-point by Delâtre opposite.

his plate, and just as bad and dangerous when he does not. Simple black ink in the lines, and clean paper between them, are not generally aimed at or cared for by printers of Delâtre's school: in the endeavour to give artistic richness to plates, they are liable to a loss of delicacy, extending even to muddiness. Notwithstanding these faults, which are no more than the defects of his qualities, and due to artistic instincts, sometimes working in a wrong direction, Delâtre is, on the whole, the most intelligent printer of etchings living. I find his ways of interpretation exceedingly favourable to certain plates, and just as injurious to others. The great evil of workmen such as those employed by Delâtre, is, that they get into fixed habits, which they follow without regard to the exigencies of particular cases. It is the nature of mechanical or manual labour to produce habits which act independently of the will or the reason; and a workman who has got into the way of darkening and softening his plates, will continue to do so when there is every reason to seek for lightness, and sharpness, and purity. Delâtre prints for richness rather than brilliancy. Lalanne likes his work for his own etchings, and, on the whole, I like it also; but I am constantly obliged to ask for more simplicity. On the other hand, the clearness of English printing seems excessive, and tends to hardness. The difference between Delâtre's printing, and that of Gad and Kenningale, is something like the difference between Daubigny's manner as a landscape-painter, and that of Leader or Vicat Cole.

An etcher ought to be able to print with the utmost brilliancy, or the utmost richness, as his plate requires it. If the plate is dry and hard, the brilliant printing only looks thin; and if the plate is full of rich work, soft and rich printing will often push the quality into its corresponding vice of muddiness. So much depends upon the plate, that clear impressions may look scratchy, and full impressions foul, when there is no corrective or compensatory intelligence. Etchers are almost as much in the

hands of their printers, as authors in those of their translators; and if the reader does not yet realize the full truth of this, he will do so when the process has been explained to him. Still better will he realize it when experience of printers, and practical work in proof-taking, shall have revealed to him what a wonderful power for good and evil may be exercised in the action of wiping an inked plate.

The miseries which etchers suffer at the hand of their printers are so great, that the reader ought to arm himself against them in time. One of the best living etchers printed, not long ago, an edition of his plates, and took the following precautions to ensure success. First, he established a complete printing-room in his own house, with an excellent press, and perfect arrangements of every kind. Then he induced a well-known master printer to come and stay with him and print, not by the hands of workmen, but with his own. Every proof was examined separately by the etcher, and, if below a certain very high standard, immediately destroyed. In this way, after much trouble and sacrifice, an edition was printed which did credit to both parties; but the etcher would not have hoped for satisfactory work if he had sent his plates to the printer's own establishment.

Impressions such as those in this volume do not pretend to be of the choicest quality,—the price of the book makes that impossible; but an endeavour has been made to get at least respectable impressions, and many proofs have been destroyed. If you want really fine proofs, you must remain by the side of the workman until he has printed them,—there is no other way; and even then you will not get an edition without weeding it. If the printer is left to himself, you may have to destroy every copy. Under the best circumstances, a perfect proof, a proof in which printing does all it can do to help the plate, does not occur once in ten impressions.

The more I learn about etching, the more I feel con-

vinced that the greatest merits of printing are purity and simplicity. Some years ago I shared more than I do now the views of Delâtre about interpretation: this was due to the weakness of my own etchings at that time, which benefited by his treatment, and would not have supported natural printing. But as soon as I discovered that whatever the printer could do to help a plate could be done with far greater certainty by the etcher himself, upon the copper, it seemed desirable that the printer should restrict himself to the simpler duty of rendering what the etcher had done, and that the etcher should take the trouble to get his plate into such a condition that no fair and conscientious workman could do it injustice. I found, too, from close personal observation of Delâtre's workmen, that the principle of interpretation was a very dangerous one to allow; for they seemed to me to interpret everything in one manner, treating every plate as if it were weak, and required to be sustained artificially. Thus I had the greatest difficulty in getting them to print any plate clearly and brilliantly, even when it most needed clearness.

It seems likely that, if etching ever becomes a sufficiently popular art for etching clubs to establish printing-houses of their own, a body of workmen may be trained who will be more reliable than any contemporary printers. These workmen ought to confine themselves exclusively to the printing of etchings, and to live in continual intercourse with the best etchers of their time.

The only entirely right way is, however, for each etcher to print all his own proofs with his own hands; and if etching were understood, the etchers would be encouraged to do so, because an impression taken by the artist would bring a far higher price than one taken by any other hand.

The actual operation of printing may be described very shortly. The plate must be heated, either on the box of sheet-iron, before mentioned, or over a spirit-lamp, till it is as hot as the hand can easily bear. Then

it must be inked all over with the dabber, and some force used to drive the ink well into the lines. Next, the whole of the superfluous ink must be removed with the coarse, stiff muslin, and the palm of the hand, and the edges cleaned with whitening. If there is a copper margin, it has to be cleaned very carefully with a rag and fine whitening.

This being done, the plate is ready for the press; but we have to prepare the paper. It has to be well damped with a sponge or brush dipped in pure water, and this is better done an hour beforehand, the sheets being put upon each other so that they may not dry. When parchment is used, it is not wetted, but left for twenty-four hours in a damp cellar, where it absorbs moisture enough for the purpose. Just before taking the proof, it is always well, in the case of rather hard papers, to give a few vigorous strokes with a clothes-brush in four different directions. This disturbs the surface of the paper, and raises a fibre which afterwards moulds itself into the lines. Having marked the place of the plate on a sheet of clean zinc, you lay it on the zinc in its measured place, and the zinc on the moving tablet of the press; then you lay the damped paper on the plate, the paper also having its outline marked on the zinc, so that the margin may be regular; and having seen that the five thicknesses of cloth are in their places, and without crease, you turn the roller till the plate has passed under it twice, once in going away from you, and once in coming back to you.

If you prefer to pass your plate only once under the roller, and remove it from the other side, you will run less risk of doubling the lines, though, if your press works truly, this ought never to occur. Your impression may, however, be less perfect in other respects.

This is a natural proof, but if your etching is weak in parts, these may be artificially sustained by what Delâtre calls *retroussage.*

Retroussage consists in making the ink rise out of the lines and spread itself in a dark tint on their edges, by means of a soft rag. The best material for this purpose is very fine muslin, thoroughly washed till all the stiffness is got out of it. This rag being softly and gently passed backwards and forwards over the plate, in a delicate caressing manner, you will perceive that the plate rapidly darkens. A proof will now give a rich and soft appearance, somewhat resembling dry-point, in which also there is a spreading of surface-ink. The reader will find examples of *retroussage* in the printing of the plates given in this volume. An abuse of *retroussage*, and insufficient cleaning of the smooth surface, are the habitual vices of Delâtre's printing.

It remains only to be said that all extremes of treatment, from extreme dryness and brilliancy to extreme richness and fulness, may be united in the same proof; and that what is called artificial, in contradistinction to natural printing, may be carried so far, that the proof itself becomes a work of art. An etcher may amuse himself in taking highly artificial proofs of this kind, and vary his effects in a curious manner; but professional printers ought to be kept to the simplest work, and if that fails to make the etching look well, let the etcher be blamed and not the printer. It is certain that any valuable quality which artificial printing can reach, may be reached by the art of the etcher, rendered by natural printing only.*

* It may be suggested to etchers that they would do well to keep their ink in tubes like those used for oil-painting, choosing the larger sizes. These tubes may be procured new of any artists' colourman, they are filled from the bottom, which is then closed, and doubled with flat pincers.

THE END.

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